100% ALL-NEW FEATURES

YOUR 164-PAGE GUIDE TO THE WORLD OF COMICS

★ SERIOUS ABOUT COMICS! ★

COMIC HEROES

PRESENTS THE SCI-FI ISSUE

FEATURING...

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

YOUR ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE COMICS AND NEW MOVIE!

PLUS!

- THE TOP 25 GREATEST SPACE HEROES EVER
- NEW DOCTOR WHO: EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS
- THE COMPLETE HISTORY OF MARVEL'S SPACE ADVENTURES

INSIDE! THE BIGGEST NAMES IN COMICS SPEAK

★ SIMONSON ★ ROMITA JR ★ KIRKMAN ★ GIBBONS ★ JOCK

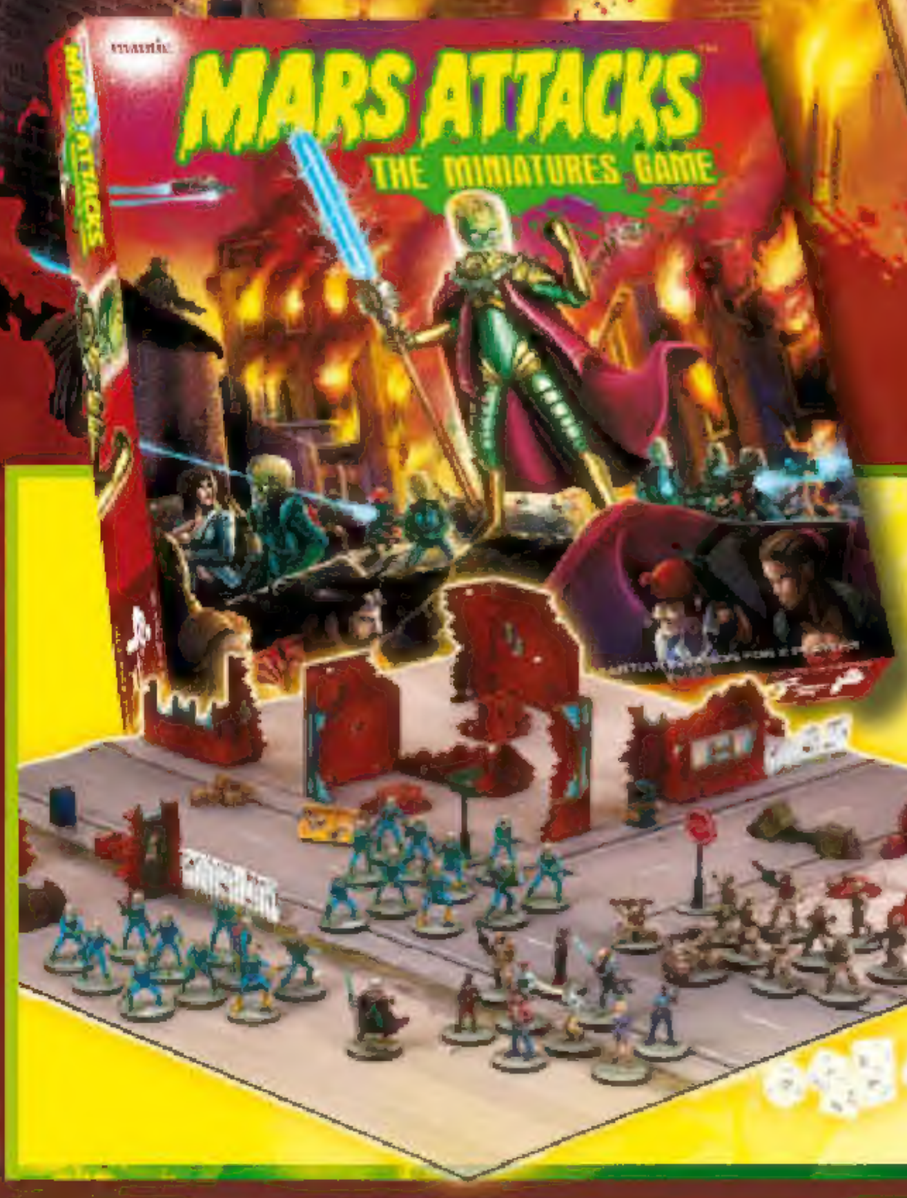
Future

mantic

MARS ATTACKS

THE MINIATURES GAME

INVADING THIS FALL!



INCLUDES EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO PLAY!

Take the fight for Earth to the streets of Greenville with battle-ready plastic miniatures that can be gamed with right out of the box!

Splat martian brains, unleash devastating freeze rays and dodge flying cars with Mars Attacks - the crazy tabletop game of Martian Mayhem!

www.manticgames.com

Topps Mars Attacks is TM & © 2014 The Topps Company, Inc. All rights reserved. Models come preassembled and unpainted.

THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS MAGAZINE! POWERPACKED WITH INTERVIEWS!

COMIC HEROES
#24
SUMMER 2014
OUT OF THIS WORLD!

COMIC HEROES

INSIDE!

TITANIUM
NOWHERE...
WHAT ADAM MEANS IS WE HIT THE GROUND RUNNING AND WE DO NOT TWIST MR AND MRS SCREW-UP TO JOIN US FOR THE DAY.
ACTIVATE PASSPORT BRACELETS

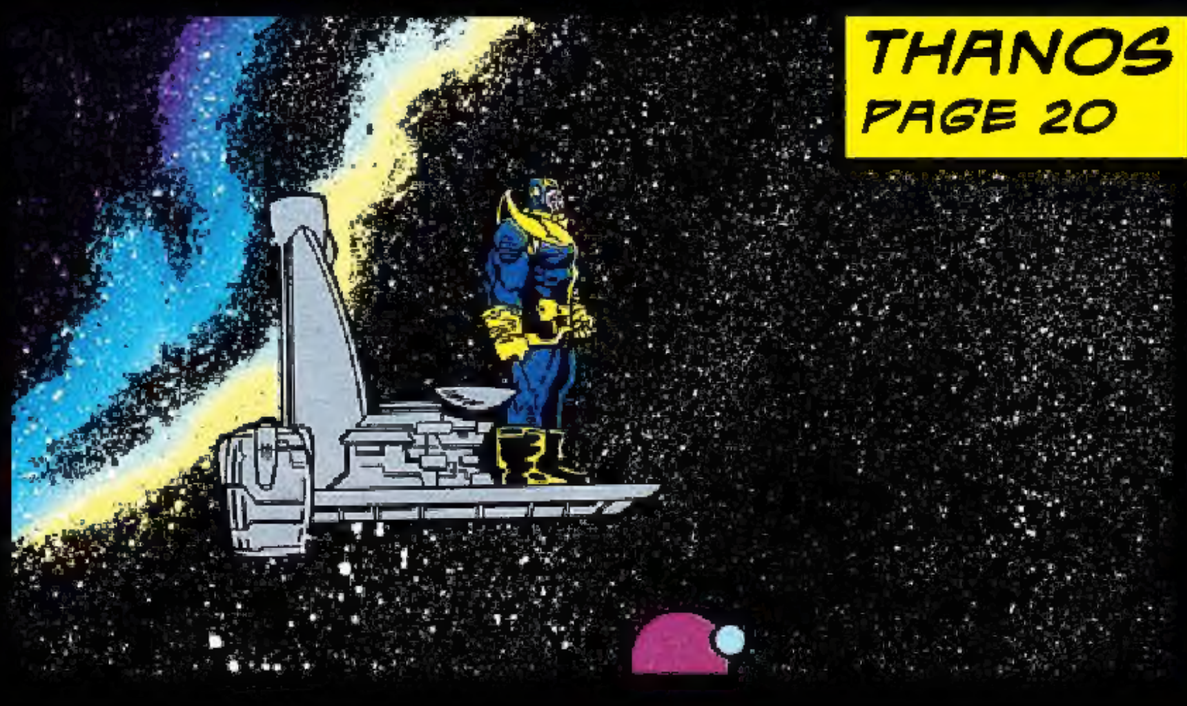
SPACE SENTINELS!

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY
PAGE 12

SUPERMAN
PAGE 94

DOCTOR WHO
PAGE 68

CONSTANTINE
PAGE 98



THANOS
PAGE 20

KICKSTARTER COMICS PAGE 22

COMIC HEROES
CONTENTS

REGULARS

6 SPLASH PAGES
A taste of what's coming your way soon

10 PANEL GAMES
An alternative angle on the last three months in comic books

33 THE VIEW FROM A BOARD
Artist Mike Perkins on the joy of drawing Deathlok the Demolisher

104 JUDGE JAMES
DC's 2007 *Amazons Attack!* crossover: wonderful or woeful?

110 THE ART OF LAURENCE CAMPBELL
Dredd, Punisher, Hellboy: Campbell talks us through his favourite work

116 THE WORLD OF COMICS
Memoir maker Emmanuel Guibert

154 HIDDEN GEMS
The fantastical work of Philippe Druillet

156 MEET THE PROSE: DOC SAVAGE
The making of a bronze-skinned superman

162 BIG ISSUES
Parable by Stan Lee and Moebius: two comic greats take on the Silver Surfer

INTERVIEWS

20 JIM STARLIN TALKS THANOS
Why he's returning to the Mad Titan, four decades after he created him

34 JOCK
Talking *Wytches*, another Scott Snyder team-up

36 JÖRG TITTEL
The *Ricky Rouse* scribe on why he's written a comic about a gun-toting rodent

74 DAVE GIBBONS
The artist talks *Watchmen* and *Doctor Who*

80 WALT SIMONSON
He's back with a new take on Thor in *Ragnarök*

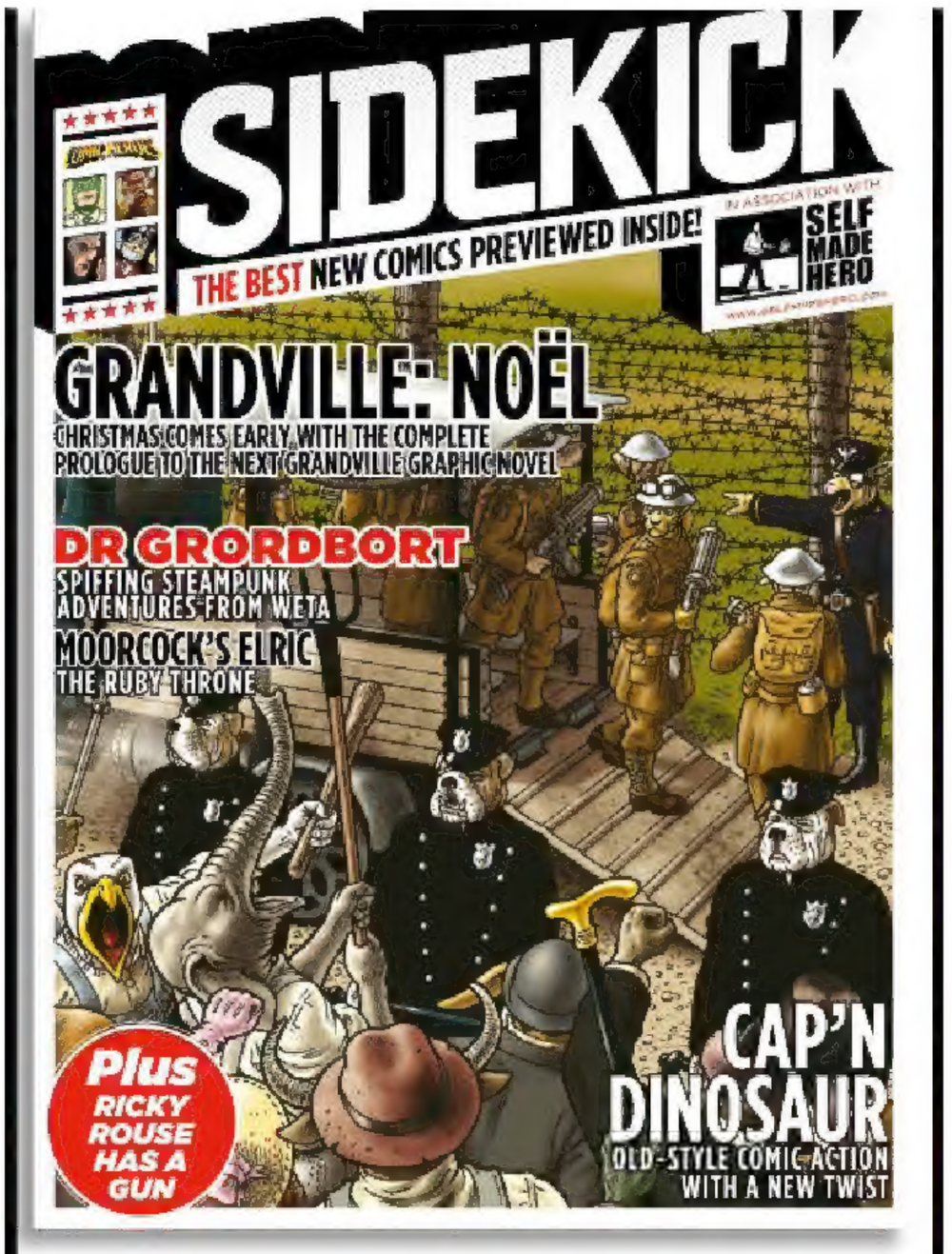
84 ROBERT KIRKMAN
From zombies to exorcisms in *Outcast*

94 JOHN ROMITA JR
The Marvel man has defected to DC!

FEATURES

12 GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY
How did a bunch of space-faring oddballs become movie stars?

22 KICKSTARTER COMICS
Is crowdfunding the way forward for indie comic book creators?


SIDEKICK
THE BEST NEW COMICS PREVIEWED INSIDE!
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
SELF MADE HERO
GRANDVILLE: NOËL
CHRISTMAS COMES EARLY WITH THE COMPLETE PROLOGUE TO THE NEXT GRANDVILLE GRAPHIC NOVEL
DR GRORDBORT
SPIFFING STEAMPUNK ADVENTURES FROM WETA
MOORCOCK'S ELRIC
THE RUBY THRONE
CAP'N DINOSAUR
OLD-STYLE COMIC ACTION WITH A NEW TWIST
Plus RICKY ROUSE HAS A GUN

CONTENTS

SIDEKICK: 121

122 GRANDVILLE: NOËL
The badger is back in Talbot's steampunk detective thriller

130 CAP'N DINOSAUR
A body plunges from the sky: the Cap'n and Honey Moon investigate

136 RICKY ROUSE HAS A GUN
A knock-off Disney theme park and a giant furry mouse

142 DR GRORDBORT PRESENTS: ONSLAUGHT
Lord Cockswain continues his interplanetary rampage

148 ELRIC: THE RUBY THRONE
A comic book adaptation of the Michael Moorcock classic

28 COMICS UNMASKED
Co-curator Paul Gravett picks his Top Ten from the British Library's comics exhibition

38 ALIEN LEGION
Carl Potts, Chuck Dixon and Larry Stroman on why they're resurrecting their space heroes

42 TOP 25 COSMIC COMIC HEROES
Counting down our favourite stars who call the cosmos their home

50 HOW TO WRITE MARVEL-STYLE
Dan Slott's top tips for writing the Marvel way

56 THE HITCHHIKERS' GUIDE TO THE COSMIC COMIC GALAXY
A whistle-stop tour around the planets

60 THE COSMIC CODE
Starlin... Englehart... Brunner... the '70s Marvel Universe was truly out of this world!

68 DOCTOR WHO
Talking to the creators behind Titan's new books

88 CHARLEY'S WAR
The greatest ever war comic

98 CONSTANTINE
Ahead of the new TV show, we celebrate the many faces of John Constantine

106 CLASH OF THE COLOURISTS
Same image, three different treatments

FROM THE MAKERS OF SFX MAGAZINE

COMIC HEROES

Future Publishing Ltd: 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW
Email: comicheroes@futurenet.com
Web: www.comicheroesmagazine.com

EDITORIAL
Editor: Dave Golder
dave.golder@futurenet.com
Art Editor: Mark Mitchell
mark.mitchell@futurenet.com
Production Editor: Andrea Ball
andrea.ball@futurenet.com
***SFX* Editor-In-Chief:** Dave Bradley
david.bradley@futurenet.com
***SFX* Art Editor:** Jonathan Coates
jonathan.coates@futurenet.com

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
Matt Bielby, Frankie D'Armata, Peter Doherty, Paul Gravett, Lee Kirby, Stephen Jewell, James Lovegrove, Joseph McCabe, Joel Meadows, Michael Molcher, Ula Mos, Mike Perkins, Will Salmon

ADDITIONAL LAYOUT
Nicky Gotobed

Cover Image © Marvel

***Comic Heroes* would like to thank:** Everyone who has worked on the mag over the past 24 issues and all of our readers.

ADVERTISING
Advertising Manager: Adrian Hill
01225 442244, adrian.hill@futurenet.com
Sales Director: Nick Weatherall
020 7042 4155, nick.weatherall@futurenet.com
Digital Ad Manager: Andrew Church
020 7042 4237, andrew.church@futurenet.com

MARKETING AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
Group Marketing Manager: Sam Wight
020 7042 4061, sam.wight@futurenet.com
Senior Marketing Executive: Tilly Michell
020 7042 4077, tilly.michell@futurenet.com
Marketing Executive: Antonella Matia
020 7042 4025, antonella.matia@futurenet.com
Direct Marketing: Adam Jones
adam.jones@futurenet.com

CIRCULATION AND LICENSING
Trade Marketing Manager: Jonathan Beeson
jonathan.beeson@futurenet.com
International Export Account Manager: Michael Peacock
+44(0)1225 732316, michael.peacock@futurenet.com
Licensing And Syndication Director: Regina Erak
regina.erak@futurenet.com
Head of Circulation: James Whitaker
james.whitaker@futurenet.com

PRINT AND PRODUCTION
Production Controller: Marie Quilter
marie.quilter@futurenet.com
Paper Controller: Lorraine Rees
lorraine.rees@futurenet.com
Advertising Production Coordinator: Gemma O'Riordan,
gemma.o'riordan@futurenet.com

THE SENIOR PARTNERS
Creative Director: Bob Abbott
Editorial Director: Jim Douglas
Deputy MD, Film & Games: Clair Porteous

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Phone our UK hotline on: 0870 837 4722
Subscribe online at: www.comicheroesmagazine.com

MAGAZINE PRINTED IN THE UK BY William Gibbons on behalf of Future
DISTRIBUTED IN THE UK BY Seymour Distribution Ltd, 2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT **Tel** 020 7429 4000
OVERSEAS DISTRIBUTION BY Future Publishing Ltd, Bath
Tel: +44 (0)1225 442244

Future produces high-quality multimedia products which reach our audiences online, on mobile and in print. Future attracts over 50 million consumers to its brands every month across five core sectors: Technology, Entertainment, Music, Creative and Sports & Auto. We export and license our publications.

Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR).
www.futureplc.com

Chief executive Zillah Byng-Maddick
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Group financial controller Matthew Burton
Tel +44 (0)20 7042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

© Future Publishing Limited 2014. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Beaufort Court, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and is, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future cannot accept any responsibility for errors or inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission, in whole or in part, in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage. And if you bothered reading that, you're probably now angrier than Banner confronted by Mr McGee.

FSC www.fsc.org MIX Paper from responsible sources FSC® C007184

recycle
When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

Facebook.com/ComicHeroes
We are committed to only using magazine paper which is derived from well managed, certified forestry and chlorine-free manufacture. Future Publishing and its paper suppliers have been independently certified in accordance with the rules of the FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). Mighty!

"Part of the art of being a hero is knowing when you don't need to be one anymore"

SPLASH PAGES

A variant wraparound cover by **Oscar Jimenez** for *Q2: The Return Of Quantum And Woody*, due for release on 15 October 2014.

Image © Valiant 2014

SPLASH PAGES

Valiant's *Rai* has to be the most gorgeously detailed comic series on sale right now thanks to the sumptuous interior art of **Clayton Crain**. Here's a typically jaw-dropping spread from issue #3.

Image © Valiant 2014

PANEL GAMES

A misguided tour of the past few months in comic books...

Who's been exploring strange new worlds?

To boldly Photoshop where no man has Photoshopped before

John Byrne is singlehandedly attempting to revive the photonovel (remember them?). His *Star Trek: New Visions* series for IDW upgrades the old-school photographs-with-captions montage format with swanky modern high-tech computering stuff, manipulating images to create all-new *Trek* tales out of existing material. The first issue, "The Mirror, Cracked", is a sequel to the classic 1967 "Mirror, Mirror" episode. Sometimes it looks a bit weird, but it's as close as you're going to get to an Original Series season four.

Here's the bridge of the Enterprise as the ship gets hit by Klingon energy blasts. For best results, shake comic book from side to side.

Eye'll be seeing you

Who's got their hands on one of the Watcher's peepers? None other than dorky Ghost Rider foe the Orb. How appropriate. Debuting in *Marvel Team-Up* #15 in 1973, the Orb was a motorcycle stunt rider who came off worst in a race with his rival Johnny Blaze and skidded along the ground on his face. His eyeball helmet not only hides his disfigurement but can hypnotise people and shoot laser beams. Of course. The question you need to ask yourself, though, is why does he wear a hood for most of *Original Sin* #2 before whipping it off at the end for the dramatic reveal. Could it be... just for the dramatic reveal?

Multilingual madness.

The prize for the promotion of international understanding goes to...

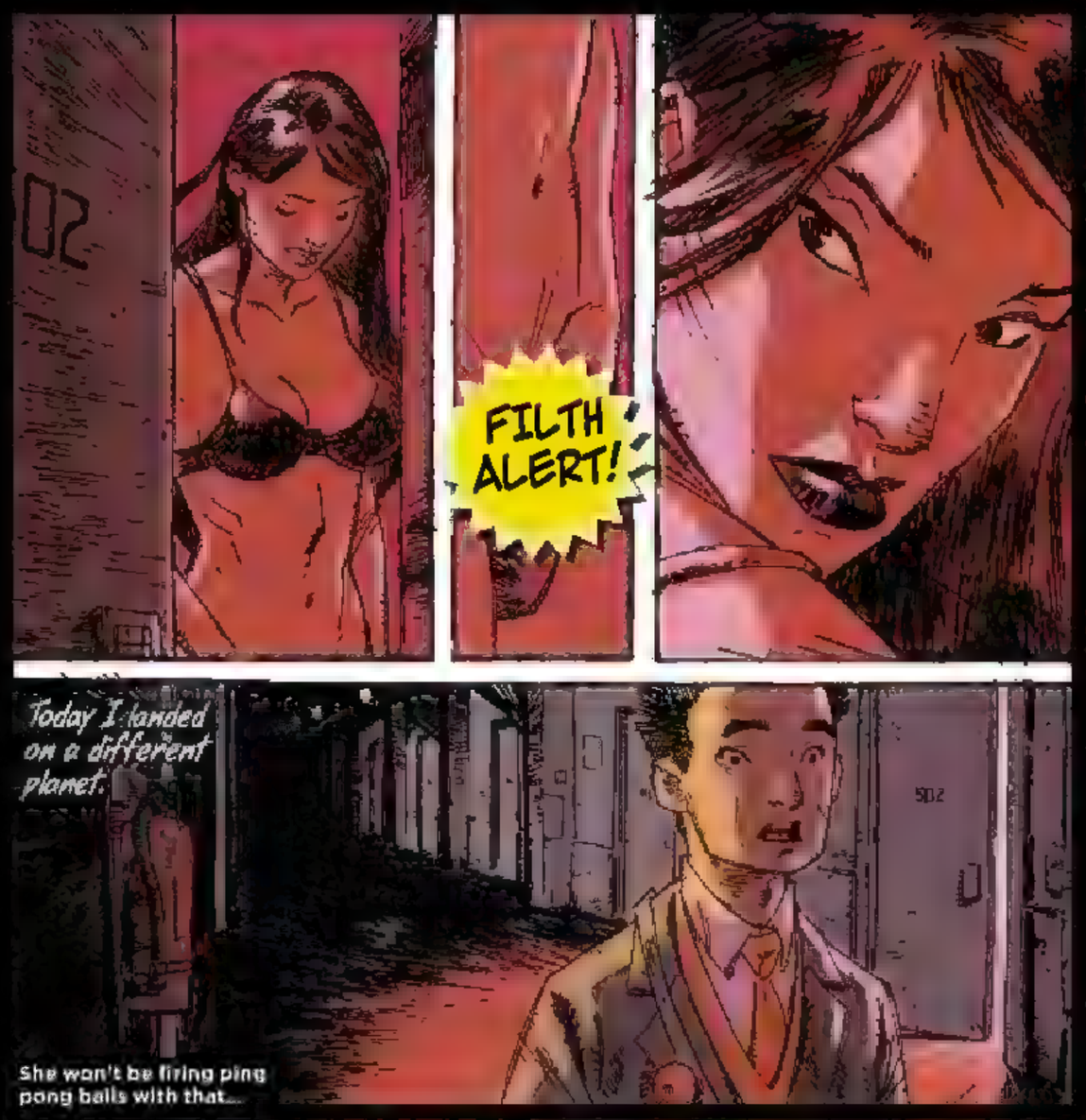
... *Harley Quinn* #6! If you ever wanted to become conversant in both Russian and Yiddish profanity, this is the comic for you. The best bit of Russian swearing is "kloun suka" which means, we think, "clown bitch" (a more or less accurate description of the title character). As for the Yiddish, the p'tcha in "p'tcha-for-brains" roughly translates as "calves' foot jelly" and not something nastier – but it's still the kind of expletive you might be tempted to use in polite company. And let's not get started on the punsome supporting-character names: Kosta Armanoleg, Zena Bendemova and, best of all, bionic senior citizen Sy Borgman... Whatever co-writers Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti are on, we'll have some of it, please.

Ladyboy mistake

We've all been there. Holiday in

"Look into my eye. Look into my eye. The eye. The eye."

That Ennis has got some balls.



Southeast Asia. Pretty girl at a bar. You get her back to your room, only to find there's a little more going on down below than you expected. No? Just us then? Anyway, issue #1 of Warren Ellis's *Trees* brings that queasy-but-strangely-unforgettable moment back to life with this two-panel sequence in which a lissom beauty turns out to have something of a sapling in her panties. Better just to pretend it never happened, right?

The dog's bollocks

That naughty scamp Garth Ennis. Just when we thought *Rover Red Charlie* was settling into being a nice, friendly funny-animal comic after all, along comes this nad-munching scene in the final issue. Bad dog!

The "If Only It Were True" department

In Rob Williams's and D'Israeli's *Ordinary*, a mysterious event gives everyone in the world different powers and abilities. In the case of the US President, that means his innermost thoughts are visible to all as thought bubbles.

Can you imagine if that happened to Obama? Our guess is all we'd see would be him musing smugly on how hot his wife is. And if it were George W Bush... Well, the bubbles would be blank.

Hissing Sid is innocent!

Ever wondered what were-chickens would look like? Wonder no more, thanks to Al Ewing's *Mighty Avengers* #10. But that's not all. At last a mainstream Marvel comic has included a reference to Captain Beaky (of Captain Beaky And His Band fame – you know, Timid Toad, Reckless Rat, Artful Owl, Batty Bat, all of them, remember?). We can die happy, clutching our vinyl copies of the original album – which featured the voices of Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and, er, Twiggy, among others – to our bosoms.

Scary Monsters (And Super Creeps)

Hydra baddie and emotion vampire the Drain, in Rick Remender's *Winter Soldier* miniseries, looks awfully familiar. As drawn by Roland Boschi, he's an albino David Bowie circa 1976 and *The Man Who Fell To Earth*. Not since Mike Allred's *Madman* has anyone paid such an overt tribute to the Thin White Duke. We can be (super)heroes...

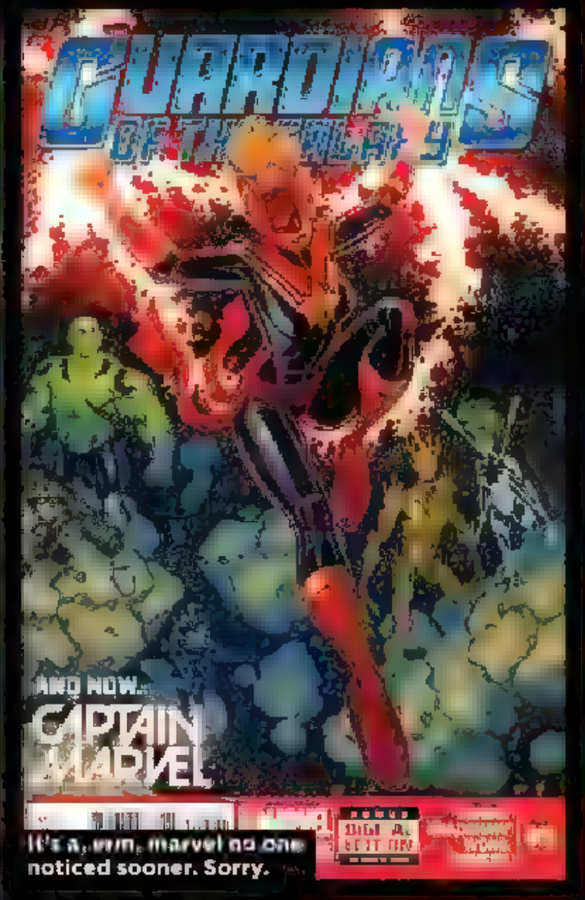
Who edits these things?

The cover of *Guardians Of The Galaxy* #15 trumpets it loud: that issue's guest star is none other than Captain Marvel. But wait. Although there are a host of cameos from other characters, the good captain herself doesn't appear in a single panel. Wha-a-at? The mob of indignant Carol Danvers fans is probably forming outside Marvel's offices right now.

Astro City atrocity

Okay, "atrocity" is maybe taking things too far. The word just looks a bit like *Astro City*, so we used it. Because that's how we roll at *Comic Heroes*. It's a shock, nonetheless, to see someone else drawing the title after a run of 66 straight issues (by our calculation) during which no one else has sat in the artist's chair but Brent Anderson. Not that Graham Nolan does a bad job in #12 of the book's Vertigo incarnation – far from it – but it doesn't feel right, and we hope this doesn't become a permanent state of affairs. Anderson is listed in the credits for his "insight and design", so we can only assume that Nolan's appearance is a guest shot and normal service will be resumed as soon as possible. At least Alex Ross is still on board, providing a gorgeous cover as usual.

Lee Kirby



LIVE
SHIT ME, WE HAVEN'T TIME GOODMAN CLUE WHAT'S GOING ON.
REST ASSURED THAT WE ARE WORKING TIRELESSLY TO BRING MATTERS UNDER CONTROL AND HAVE OUR BRIGHTEST MINDS WORKING ON THIS RIGHT NOW
THE REDNECKS AND RIGHT-WING NUT JOBS HAVE STARTED SHOOTING EACH OTHER ALREADY I KNOW IT
I URGE ALL AMERICANS TO STAY INDOORS FOR THE TIME BEING UNTIL WE CAN BE SURE EXACTLY WHAT IS HAPPENING
Like politicians all over, then.

SENTINELS OF THE SPACEWAYS

Way back in early 1969, a minor superhero team turned up for an issue of *Marvel Super-Heroes*, then disappeared for five years. This summer, they're the biggest news in pop culture. **Matt Bielby** investigates...

The Guardians get their first regular series in *Marvel Presents* #3-#12.

The original line-up, as freakish then as they are now.

All images © Marvel

One of the consistently fun aspects of the Marvel Universe is how certain characters swim in and out of focus, enjoying periods of glory then fading away, only to be rediscovered decades later by a new generation of writers and artists. Spider-Woman experienced an unlikely resurgence in the Noughties, while the company's kung fu characters have returned to the spotlight more recently. But by far the most exciting, ridiculous and spectacular nobodies-become-somebodies story has been enjoyed by the Guardians of the Galaxy. A deep-space, initially far-future team of aliens and renegades originally created by such minor players as Arnold Drake for the near-forgotten part-reprint title *Marvel Super-Heroes* in 1968, they enjoyed only spluttering success over the following decade before disappearing, seemingly forever.

So what happened? Somehow we are now on the cusp of a $150m-budgeted summer movie starring these guys, a bunch of oddballs virtually unknown outside the comic shops – and it's a film that is building a word-of-mouth buzz that most projects can only dream of. How on Earth – or off it – did the Guardians of the Galaxy become one of the biggest properties in comics?

EARTH SHALL OVERCOME!

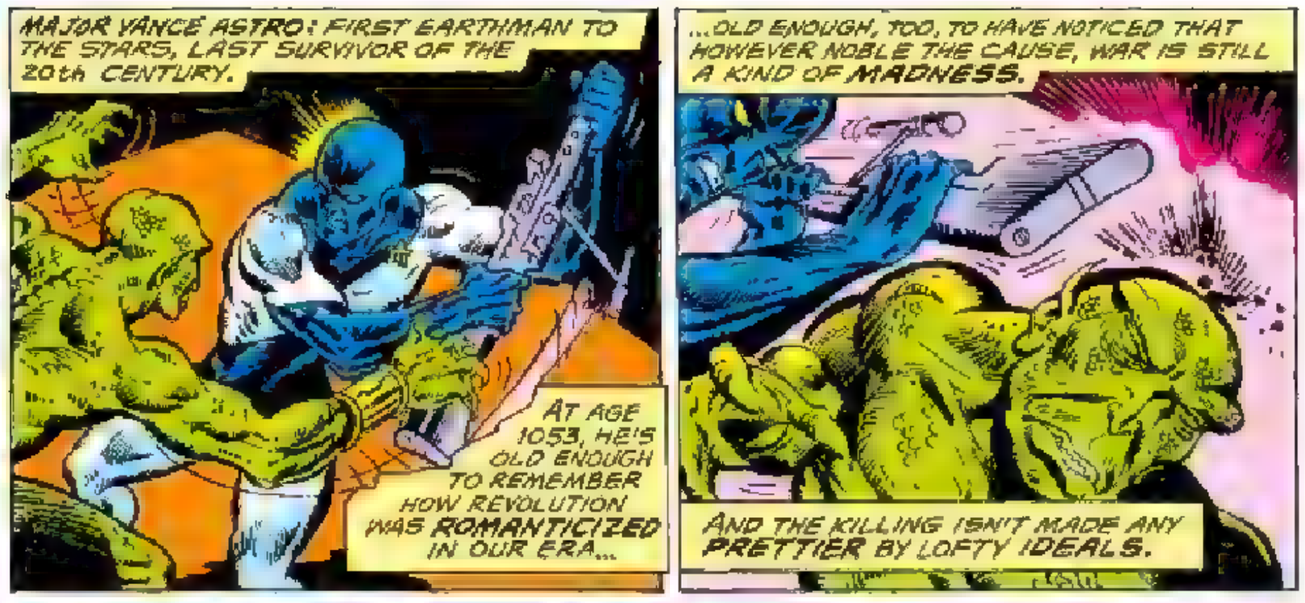
Fans of the original *Guardians Of The Galaxy* – and it certainly has some – would be hard pushed to recognise anything of their heroes, name aside, in the current incarnation. The first Guardians launched in *Marvel Super-Heroes* #18 (January 1969) as Robin Hood-type rebels against an evil 31st century Badoon empire. These man-reptile tyrants – originally created by Stan Lee and John Buscema for their glorious, short-lived late '60s *Silver Surfer* title – seemed to have escaped from under the shadow of their 20th century rival alien menaces – notably the Kree and the Skrulls – and gone on to conquer Earth and its colony planets across the Solar System in the intervening millennium.

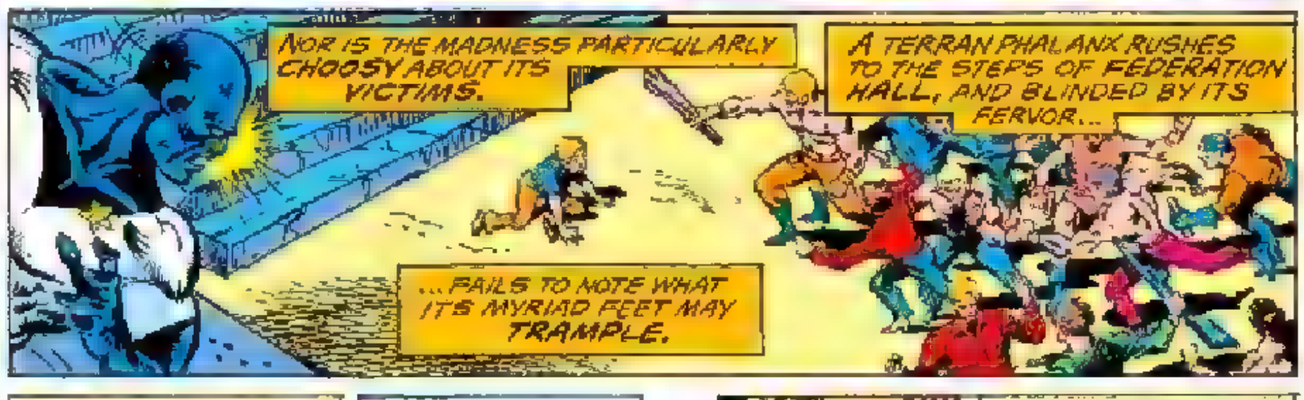
> **“It's a movie starring a bunch of oddballs virtually unknown outside of comics”**

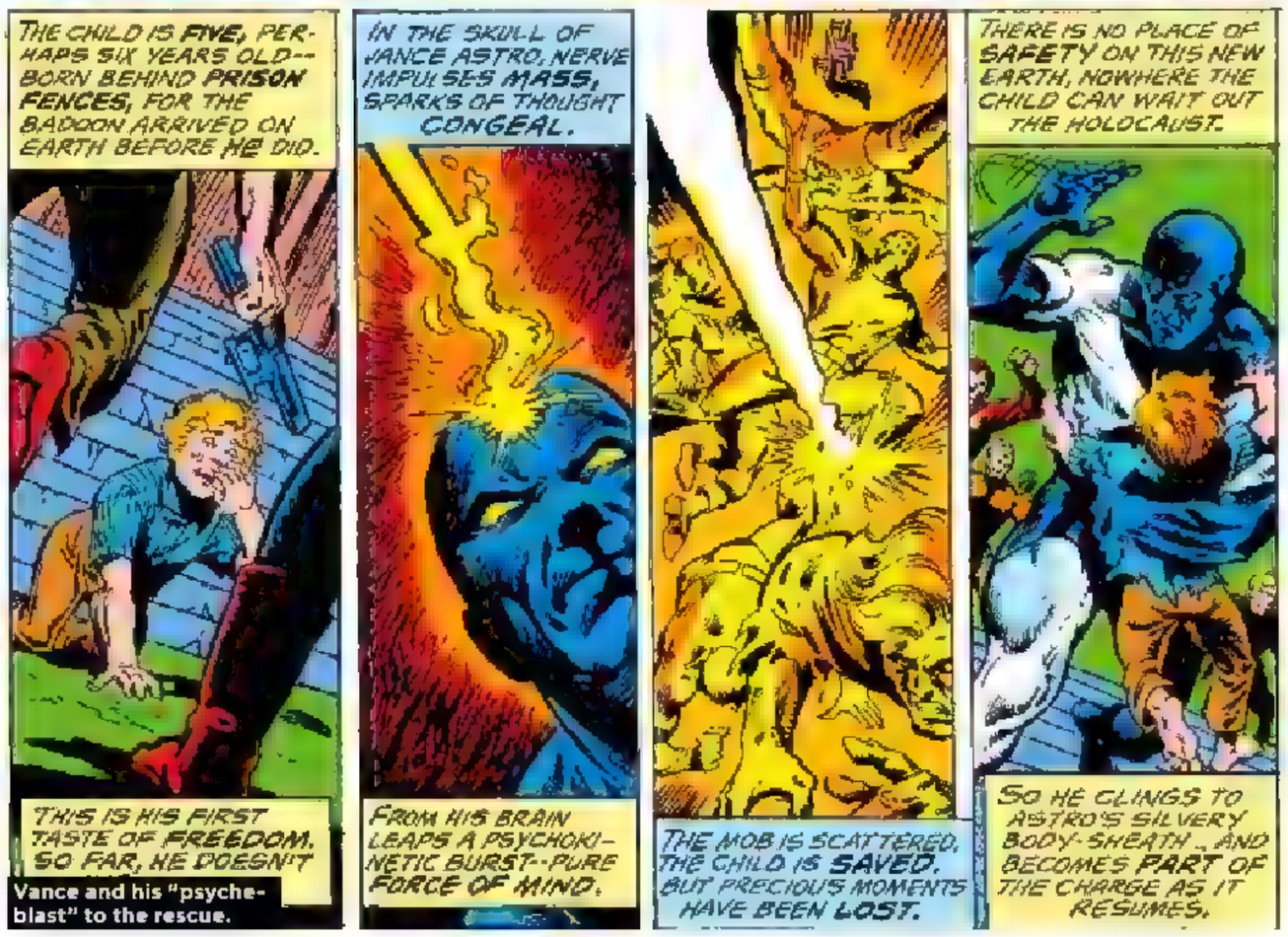
Both this future timeline – later dubbed Earth-691 in the language of Marvel's Alan Moore-created, Michael Moorcock-influenced Multiverse – and the core Guardians characters were created by Arnold Drake (a DC writer best known for co-creating Deadman and Doom Patrol, who briefly freelanced at Marvel in the late '60s) and artist Gene Colan.

Their leader, originally, was Major Vance Astro, a young astronaut from the 20th century who – in the then-future of »

A TEN-CENTURY-OLD MAN AND HIS FANTASTIC GUERRILLA LEGION FIGHT TO FREE PLANET EARTH!
EDITED BY STAN LEE
WRITTEN BY ARNOLD DRAKE
PENCILLED BY GENE COLAN
INKED BY MICKEY DEMEO
LETTERED BY HERB COOPER
GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY!
IT IS THE YEAR 3007! A SINGLE FLAG FLIES OVER U.L.E.--THE UNITED LANDS OF EARTH--AND OVER THE DOZENS OF PLANETS IN THE U.L.E. FEDERATION! WARS AMONG NATIONS LONG AGO CEASED--BUT THE WAR OF THE STAR-SYSTEMS HAS ONLY BEGUN...
THIS IS CHARLIE-27, FIFTH GENERATION OF HIS FAMILY BORN ON PLANET JUPITER--AFTER SPACE-MIGRATING FROM EARTH! LIKE ALL PIONEERS, CHARLIE 27'S HUMAN BODY WAS ADAPTED AT BIRTH TO WITHSTAND JUPITER'S CONDITIONS--ELEVEN TIMES THE MASS AND THREE TIMES THE GRAVITY OF EARTH -!
The poteto-headed wide-load that is Charlie-27.

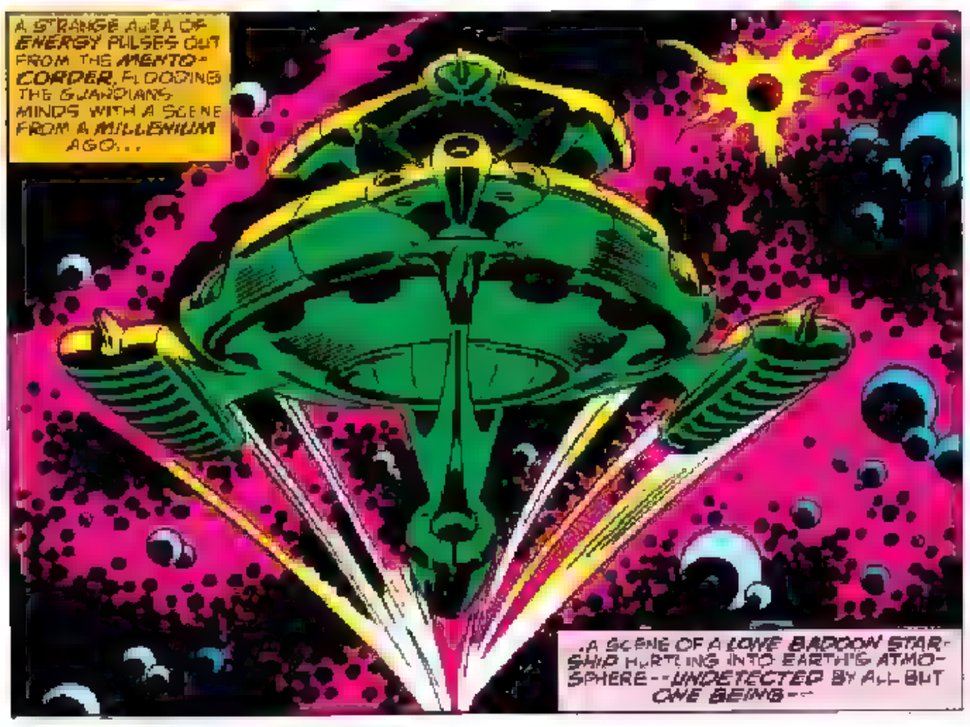

MAJOR VANCE ASTRO: FIRST EARTHMAN TO THE STARS, LAST SURVIVOR OF THE 20th CENTURY.
AT AGE 1053, HE'S OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER HOW REVOLUTION WAS ROMANTICIZED IN OUR ERA...
...OLD ENOUGH, TOO, TO HAVE NOTICED THAT HOWEVER NOBLE THE CAUSE, WAR IS STILL A KIND OF MADNESS.
AND THE KILLING ISN'T MADE ANY PRETTIER BY LOFTY IDEALS.


NOR IS THE MADNESS PARTICULARLY CHOOSY ABOUT ITS VICTIMS.
A TERRAN PHALANX RUSHES TO THE STEPS OF FEDERATION HALL, AND BLINDED BY ITS FERVOR...
...FAILS TO NOTE WHAT ITS MYRIAD FEET MAY TRAMPLE.


THE CHILD IS FIVE, PERHAPS SIX YEARS OLD--BORN BEHIND PRISON FENCES, FOR THE BADOON ARRIVED ON EARTH BEFORE ME DID.
THIS IS HIS FIRST TASTE OF FREEDOM. SO FAR, HE DOESN'T
IN THE SKULL OF VANCE ASTRO, NERVE IMPULSES MASS, SPARKS OF THOUGHT CONGEAL.
FROM HIS BRAIN LEAPS A PSYCHOKINETIC BURST--PURE FORCE OF MIND.
THE MOB IS SCATTERED. THE CHILD IS SAVED. BUT PRECIOUS MOMENTS HAVE BEEN LOST.
THERE IS NO PLACE OF SAFETY ON THIS NEW EARTH, NOWHERE THE CHILD CAN WAIT OUT THE HOLOCAUST.
SO HE CLINGS TO ASTRO'S SILVERY BODY-SHEATH ... AND BECOMES PART OF THE CHARGE AS IT RESUMES.
Vance and his "psyche-blast" to the rescue.

1988 – was sent on a lone, Buck Rogers-type mission into deep space. Lacking faster-than-light tech, his ship would take 1,000 years to reach Earth's nearest star, Alpha Centauri, and to keep him alive all that time he was injected with some sort of embalming fluid-type artificial blood, encased in a metal second skin and chucked into suspended animation.

Except, of course, that when he eventually reached his destination – now with psionic powers that had developed in hibernation – he found a recently FTL-equipped humanity had already got there, and was now living peacefully side-by-side with the blue-skinned native tribesmen. When the Badoon attack – first Centauri IV, then mankind's Solar System colonies and finally Earth itself – Astro teams up with Centauri bowman Yondu and the last surviving members of two genetically modified human sub-species to bring the fight to the Badoon. Charlie-27 is wide as a house, massively strong, and was created to live under the oppressive gravity of Jupiter, while Martinex is from Pluto, and comes covered with a sort of silicon crystalline skin to help him survive the extreme temperatures there; both, naturally, are good in a fight.


A STRANGE AURA OF ENERGY PULSES OUT FROM THE MENTO-CORDER, FLOODING THE GUARDIANS' MINDS WITH A SCENE FROM A MILLENIUM AGO...
...A SCENE OF A LOWE BADOON STAR-SHIP HURTLING INTO EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE--UNDETECTED BY ALL BUT ONE BEING--

THE POWER OF STARHAWK

But hang on, you might be saying. What's all this? No Rocket Raccoon? No walking trees? Indeed not – and there wouldn't be for decades yet.

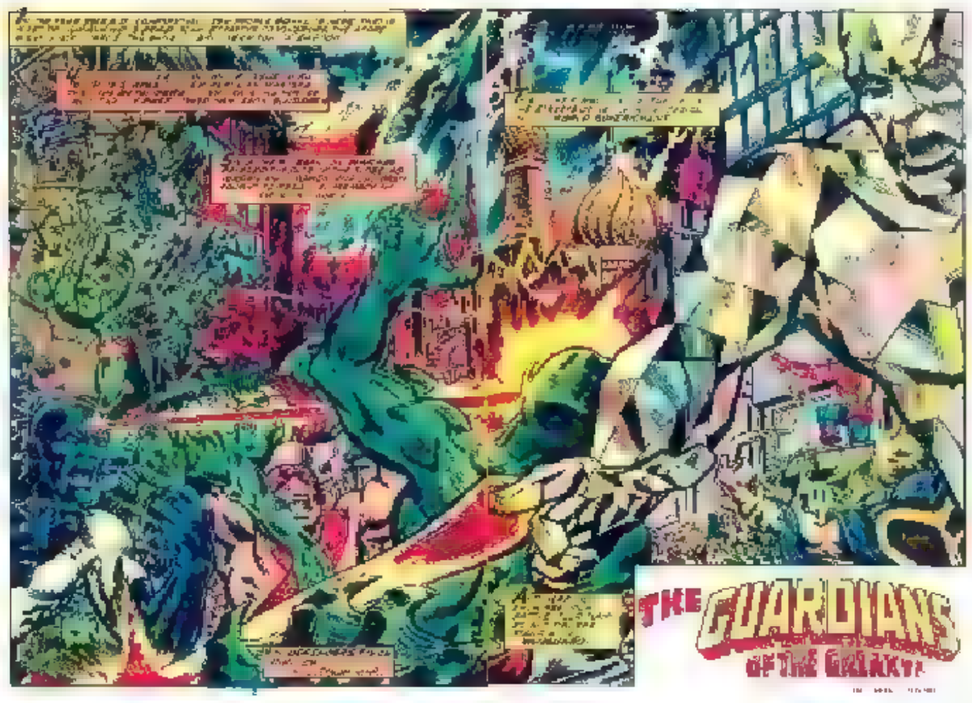
Following their debut, the Guardians disappeared for five years, only to be eventually rescued by Steve Gerber – Marvel's quirkiest and, sporadically, most intelligent writer of the day – for Marvel *Two-In-One* (*The Thing* team-up comic Gerber was then writing), and, following that, his mid-'70s *Defenders* run.

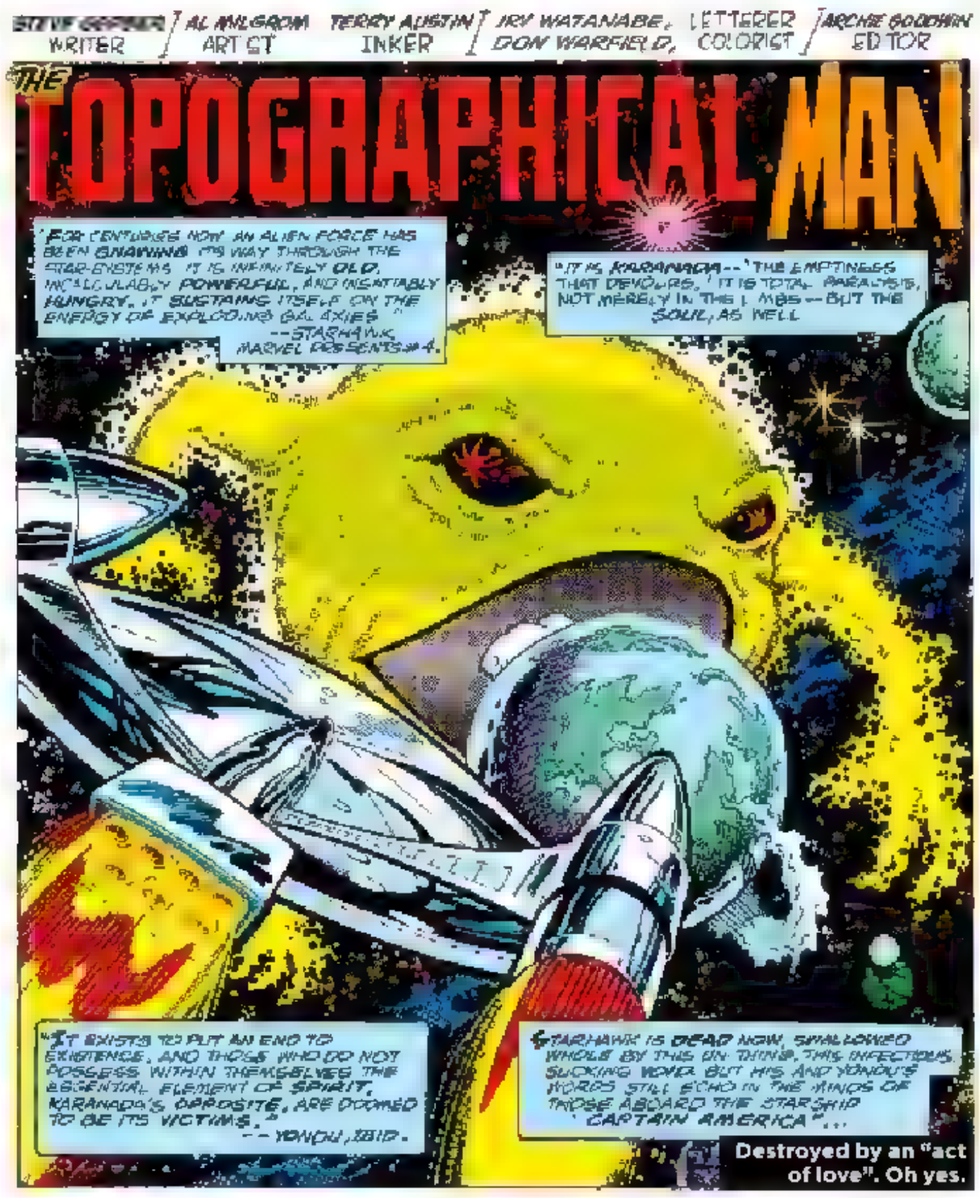
The Defenders #26 (August 1975) is the key issue here, detailing the future history of Earth in chilling, fascinating fashion for a mainstream Marvel audience, while the following issues whisk Dr Strange, Hulk, Valkyrie and co to the Guardians' nightmarish 3007, there to take the fight to the Badoon and enjoy a first encounter with a powerful, arrogant so-and-so called Starhawk, a character that had been promised since as far back as *Marvel Super-Heroes* #20, but who'd never showed up (bar a brief appearance in *Marvelmania*, short-lived in-house Marvel fanzine) until now.

Not to be mistaken for the modern Star-Lord – the entertaining, charming, troubled jerk of the present-day Guardians – this guy was a cold and remote mystery man in the Silver Surfer mould, his story unfolding over the subsequent 1970s Guardians appearances. These were in scattered issues of books like *The Avengers*, but chiefly in their own intriguing, rather out-there 10-issue 1976-77 run in *Marvel Presents* (yet another short-lived try-out title), by Gerber and artist Al Milgrom.

This series introduced the last of the original members – Nikki, a genetically-modified woman from Earth's Mercury

STEVE GERBER WRITER / A. MILGROM & H. CHAYKIN ARTISTS / K. MANTLO J. COHEN • LETTERER • COLORIST / M. WOLFMAN EDITOR
PLANET OF THE ABSURD!
DUE TO TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES, THE GUARDIANS' QUEST TO THE CENTER OF THE GALAXY HAS BEEN, PERHAPS PERMANENTLY, INTERRUPTED. THE EONS-OLD ENERGY-DEVOURING CREATURE THEY'D SOUGHT TO DESTROY HAS (Why be delicate?) EATEN THEIR ALLY STARHAWK AND SOMEHOW INFECTED THE CIRCUITRY OF THE "CAPTAIN AMERICA."
NOW, LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEMS FAILING, AUXILIARY POWER WANING RAPIDLY, THEY PREPARE TO ABANDON SHIP.
--NO MORE ARGUMENT! I CAN GENERATE MY OWN HEAT, I CAN SEE IN THE DARK, AND I DON'T NEED AIR TO BREATHE!
I'LL STAY ABOARD AND EFFECT REPAIRS! AND YOU'LL SIMPLY HAVE TO MANAGE ON THE PLANET BELOW!
TELEPORT ACTIVATED!!
Marvel Presents #5: the Guardians and Gerber were made for each other.
LET 'IM LOOSE, CRUBS-- OR SOMEBODY'S HEAD GETS BLOWN AWAY!
IF THAT IS A THREAT...
IT'S A PROMISE, PAL. WE'RE IN FOR A FIGHT.



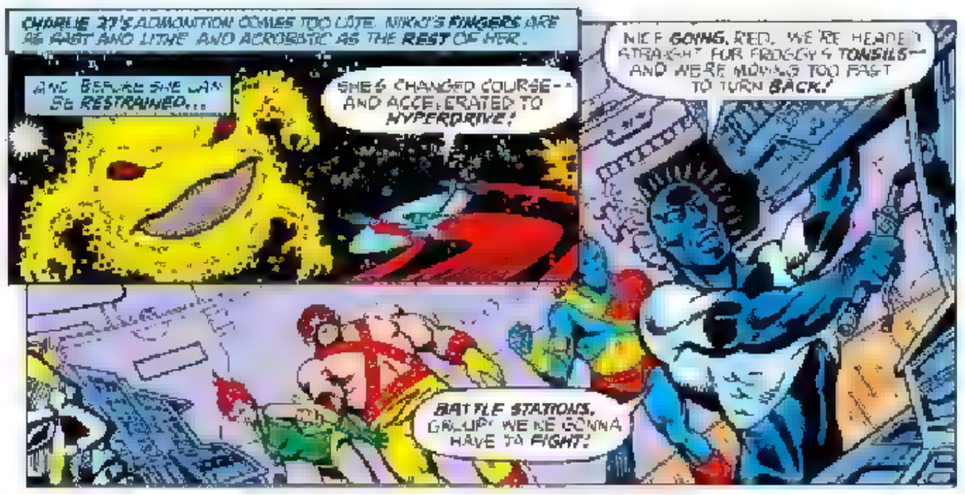

STEVE GERBER WRITER / AL MILGROM ART ST / TERRY AUSTIN INKER / IRV WATANABE, DON WARFIELD, LETTERER COLORIST / ARCHIE GOODWIN ED TOR
THE TOPOGRAPHICAL MAN
FOR CENTURIES NOW, AN ALIEN FORCE HAS BEEN GNAWING ITS WAY THROUGH THE STAR-SYSTEMS. IT IS INFINITELY OLD, INCALCULABLY POWERFUL, AND INSATIABLY HUNGRY. IT SUSTAINS ITSELF ON THE ENERGY OF EXPLODING GALAXIES." --STARHAWK, MARVEL PRESENTS #4.
"IT IS KARANADA--'THE EMPTINESS THAT DEVOURS.' IT IS TOTAL PARASITE, NOT MERELY IN THIS OR THAT--BUT THE SOUL, AS WELL
"IT EXISTS TO PUT AN END TO EXISTENCE, AND THOSE WHO DO NOT POSSESS WITHIN THEMSELVES THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF SPIRIT, KARANADA'S OPPOSITE, ARE DOOMED TO BE ITS VICTIMS." --YONDU, IBID.
STARHAWK IS DEAD NOW, SWALLOWED WHOLE BY THIS UN-THING, THIS INFECTIOUS, SUCKING VOID! BUT HIS AND YONDU'S WORDS STILL ECHO IN THE MINDS OF THOSE ABOARD THE STARSHIP "CAPTAIN AMERICA"...
Destroyed by an "act of love". Oh yes.

colony, good with a gun and boasting flames instead of hair – and explored Starhawk's half-human, half-artificial character: an arch-manipulator, annoying (he constantly called himself "One Who Knows"), powered to outrageous levels by an alien Hawk God, and doomed to relive his own life countless times.

In truth, Gerber's run on *Guardians* wasn't one of his most virtuoso jobs, but it was not without its memorable moments. The "Planet Of The Absurd" issue – in which the Guardians explore a world highly reminiscent of gangster-era New York – was played like a bizarro *Star Trek: TOS* episode, and enjoyed a title that seemed to sum up Gerber's whole approach to life and to comic books; the stories that revealed Starhawk to be effectively transgender, a man *and* a woman – adopted siblings and lovers – merged into one was something of a stunner too.

And this *Guardians* run also featured the first blatant act of sexual intercourse in a Comics Code-approved superhero book, in which Vance Astro and Nikki do it – in disguised form. In order to destroy the Topographical Man – a planet-size humanoid energy vampire who fed on exploding galaxies – Vance's psyche was absorbed by their enemy and started to control its consciousness; meanwhile, Nikki was strapped into a gizmo that split her spirit from her body, and her astral form went to communicate with the big fella.

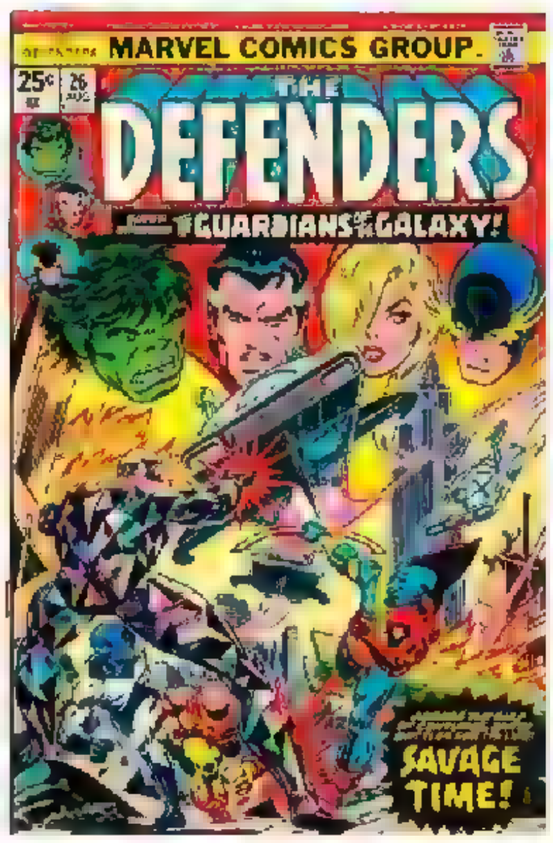
Of course, Nikki – hot blooded type that she is – soon saw the best way forward

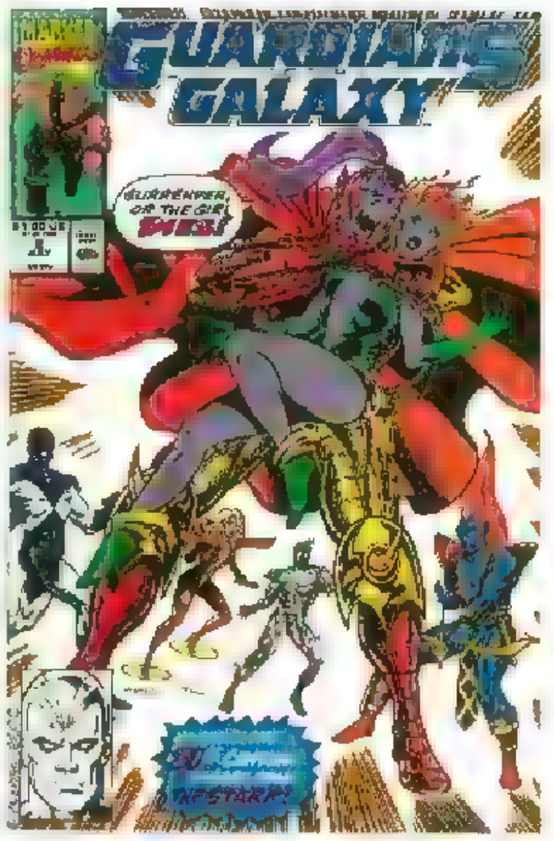

CHARLIE 27'S AMMUNITION COMES TOO LATE. NIKKI'S FINGERS ARE AS FAST AND LITHE AND ACROBATIC AS THE REST OF HER.
AND BEFORE SHE CAN BE RESTRAINED...
SHE'S CHANGED COURSE-- AND ACCELERATED TO HYPERDRIVE!
NICE GOING, REED. WE'RE HEADED STRAIGHT FOR FROGGY'S TONSILS-- AND WE'RE MOVING TOO FAST TO TURN BACK!
BATTLE STATIONS, GROUP! WE'RE GONNA HAVE TO FIGHT!

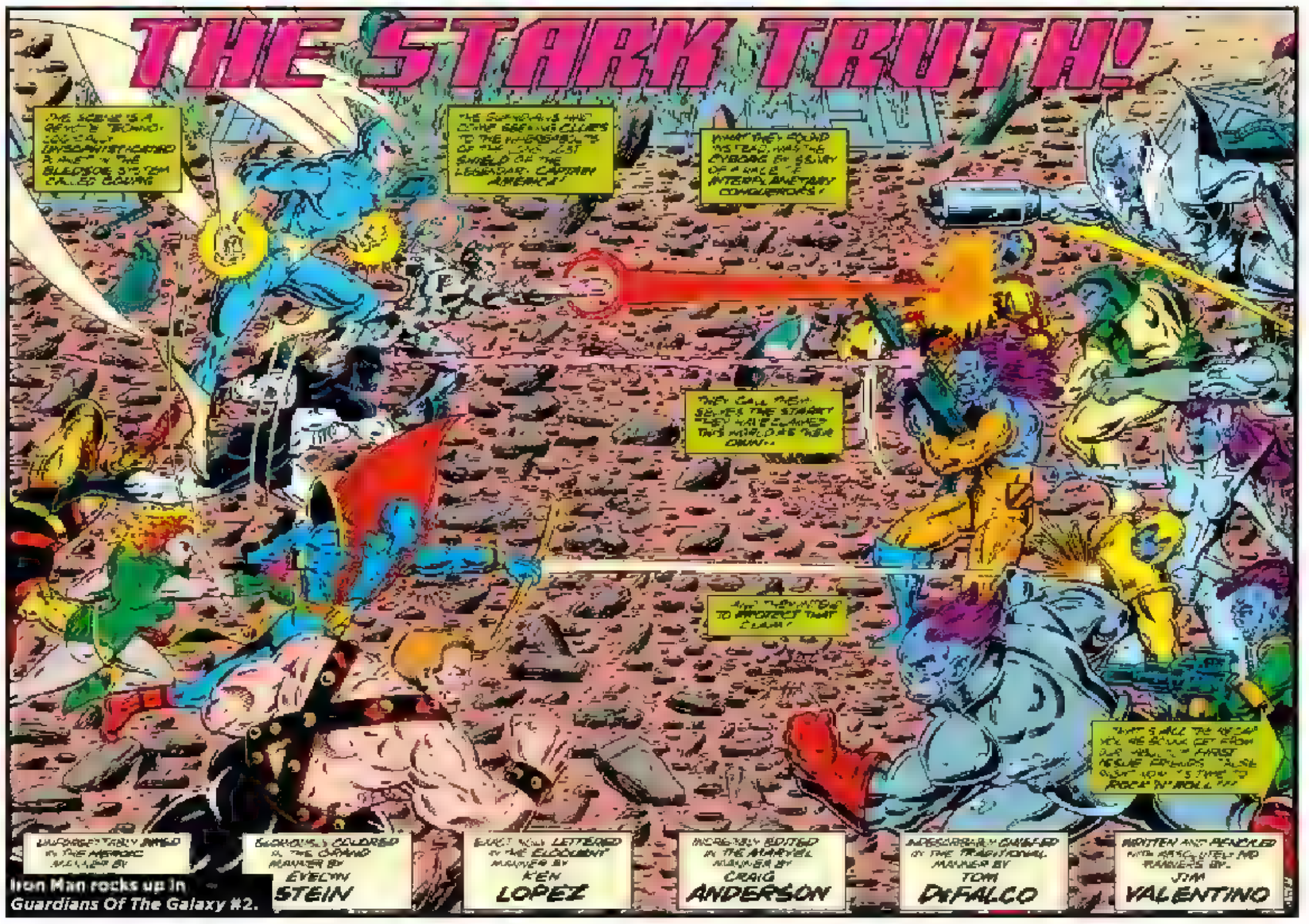
> **"*Guardians* was a far weirder comic than it appeared to be"**

was not chat but coitus, something Vance was well up for, as the sexual tension had been unbearable on the Guardians' ship (a USS Enterprise-knockoff called, bizarrely, Captain America) up until then. Soon a grinning astral-Nikki "reaches gently out, to awaken him with her touch" then clearly mounts him, "in order that, acting in concert, they might destroy him forevermore". The Topographical Man is then ripped apart in an explosion clearly centred on his crotch, caused because he, or it, had been forced to "engage in an act of love, an affirmation of its own opposite, which is life".

It was amazing stuff – amazing that the Comics Code let it slide – but perhaps the prosaic, unsexy "it's just regular »






THE STARK TRUTH!
THE SCENE IS A GENTLE TOWN... SOMEWHERE IN THE MIDWEST... UNASSUMING AND UNDISTINGUISHED IN MANY WAYS... THE SLEEPIEST SPOT YOU CAN'T IMAGINE!
THE GUARDIANS HAVE COME SEEKING CLUES TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE LOST SHIELD OF THE LEGENDARY CAPTAIN AMERICA!
WHAT THEY FOUND INSTEAD WAS THE CARNAGE OF A WAR BETWEEN INTERPLANETARY CONQUERORS!
THEY CALL THEM SENTRIES THE STARKS! THE HALF-CLONES THAT WOULD BE THEIR OWN...
AND THEY WILL DO ANYTHING TO PROTECT THAT LEGACY!
THAT'S ALL THE NEWS YOU'RE GETTING FROM OUR REGULAR FIRST ISSUE GRIMDEX FLASH! RIGHT NOW IT'S TIME TO ROCK 'N' ROLL!!!
Iron Man rocks up in Guardians Of The Galaxy #2.
LUMINOUSLY INKED IN THE HEROIC MANNER BY
GLORIOUSLY COLORED IN THE GRAND MANNER BY EVELYN STEIN
EXACTLY NOW LETTERED IN THE ELOQUENT MANNER BY KEN LOPEZ
INCREDIBLY EDITED IN THE MARVEL MANNER BY CRAIG ANDERSON
ADEQUATELY INKED IN THE TRADITIONAL MANNER BY TOM DeFALCO
WRITTEN AND PENCILED WITH ABSOLUTELY NO FRAMERS BY... JIM VALENTINO

superheroes" art of Milgrom (as with Sal Buscema's similarly generic stuff on Gerber's *Defenders* issues of the time) helped sell it; *Guardians*, like much of Gerber, was a far weirder comic than it appeared to be on the surface.

Eventually these Guardians would defeat the Badoon, return numerous times to 20th century Earth – not least to help the Avengers against Korvac in one of the all-time great Marvel storylines – and then fade away for many years, to be revived for a brand new, surprisingly enduring '90s series by writer-artist Jim Valentino, then one of Marvel's rising stars.

His take on the Guardians lasted a creditable 62 issues across the first half of the '90s, the team now shooting about in Captain America – named, of course, for the legendary hero – as self-appointed protectors of the Milky Way; literally, as "Guardians of the Galaxy". Future-versions of existing Marvel heroes would crop up relentlessly – we get 31st century descendants of Ghost Rider, Iron Man, Doctor Doom, Galactus, Silver Surfer, Wolverine – and it's here that Vance Astro decides, ludicrously, to rename himself Major Victory.

This take on the Guardians is a consistently average series, really – but it was produced in a so-so approximation of the then-trendy West Coast style of Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee and others, and it would see Valentino become part of their cocky, ambitious gang.

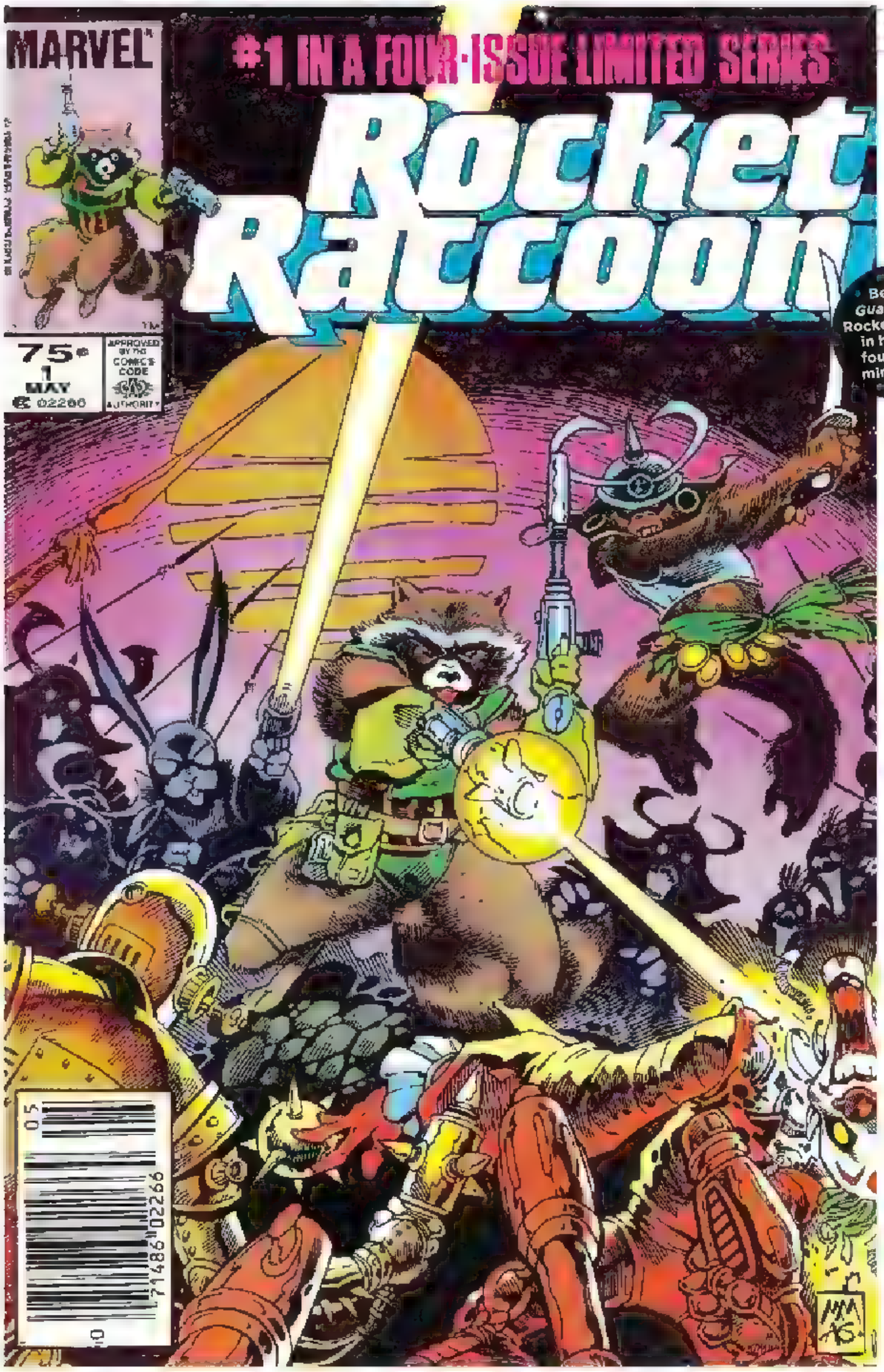
When the entire lot of them up-sticked to found Image, Valentino was part of it, contributing to the new company a borderline tasteless grim vigilante called Shadowhawk. This take on Guardians limped on without him for a while, however, but by 1995 it was all over – and the team would stay out of the limelight for over a decade.

So that's a good quarter century of the Guardians of the Galaxy without a whiff of talking beasts or walking trees. What in the universe could happen to see their star rise so brightly, so quickly, in the decades since?

A NEW TEAM WILL RISE...

The answer comes with the 2006 revival of interest in Outer Space Marvel that arrived with *Annihilation*, an epic crossover series written by Keith Giffen which was built of bookend issues plus miniseries for the Silver Surfer, Nova and a number of Cosmic villains: Thanos, Drax the Destroyer, Super-Skrull and Ronan the Accuser. Both Star-Lord and Thanos's adopted daughter, Gamora, crop up too, and when the British writing team of Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning took over for a sequel, *Annihilation: Conquest*, the modern day Guardians of the Galaxy team started to come together.

This time out Star-Lord had his own miniseries as part of the "event", Groot and Rocket Raccoon join the fray, Starhawk popped up (after teleporting himself back from his far-future timeline,



"I CHALLENGED...
GROOT!
THE MONSTER FROM PLANET X!
FOOL--NONE CAN WITHSTAND THE MIGHTY GROOT! YOU ARE DOOMED! YOU AND YOUR TOWN SHALL PERISH!
EVANS, DON'T DEFY THE MONSTER! HE'LL DESTROY YOU!
I'M NOT AFRAID! GROOT--YOU'LL NEVER TAKE OUR TOWN! I'LL FIND SOME WAY TO STOP YOU!
HOW CAN A HUMAN BEING CONQUER THE UNCONQUERABLE ?
Groot made his debut in 1960 in *Tales To Astonish* #13.

appearing as both a man and a woman) along with virtually every other space hero or villain the creative team could think of, and the whole thing ends with a plan to create a new outfit to prevent such deep space catastrophes from ever happening again. Thus was born the new Guardians of the Galaxy – inspired by the original Guardians, but largely unconnected to them – with an initial line-up of Star-Lord, Quasar, Adam Warlock, Drax the Destroyer, Gamora, sentient extra-terrestrial tree Groot and, yes, Rocket Raccoon: a comedy, Beatles-inspired, talking, gun-toting forest-dwelling mammal.

It was weird alright, but then the Guardians of the Galaxy had ever been so.

Rocket had been created by Bill Mantlo and Keith Giffen as a non-too-serious tribute to the cowboy-themed spoof folk song Rocky Raccoon from The Beatles' *White Album*; he'd first appeared in *Marvel Preview* in 1976, became a *Hulk* supporting character for a while, and had enjoyed his own four-issue miniseries in 1985.

Groot had begun life in 1960 as an example of the slew of alien monstrosities attempting Earth invasion in Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's *Tales To Astonish*, one of the many monster books published by Marvel before it became the company we know with the launch of the *Fantastic Four*. Pre-Guardians he'd only reappeared very occasionally, in the odd *Hulk* or *Spider-Man* book, before a minor 2006 revival as part of *Nick Fury's Howling Commandos* – an unsuccessful miniseries that attempted to weld Marvel's secondary supernatural characters to the super-spy agency. Drax and Gamora, meanwhile, had always been as much villain as hero.

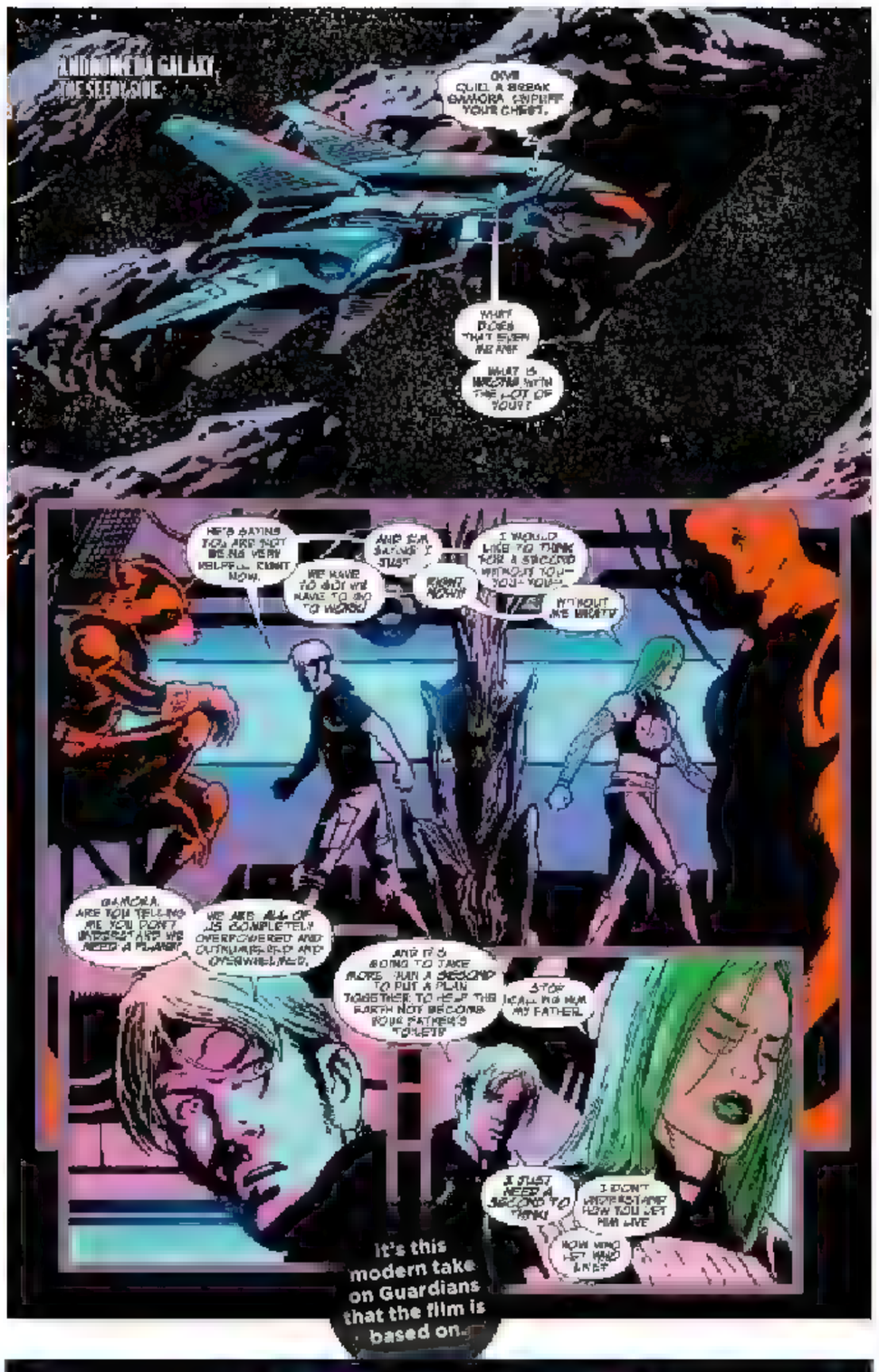
> **"So that's a good 25 years without a whiff of talking beasts or walking trees"**

The new Abnett and Lanning *Guardians* ongoing book launched in May 2008 – alongside a new, linked *Nova* series, from the same writers – but wasn't a massive hit, lasting just 25 issues. However, it clearly had an audience, admirers – and potential. The new team would now echo the early »

career of the original Guardians, appearing as guests in other books and in a number of crossovers (*War Of Kings*, *The Thanos Imperative*), shedding members and adding new ones. By the end, people like Mantis, Major Victory, Jack Flag, Bug from the Micronauts and even a talking dog called Cosmo were members, while Drax and Star-Lord were both dead.

With the arrival of Marvel NOW! in late 2010, however, the Guardians got another bite at the cherry, this time handled by the all-star creative team of writer Brian Michael Bendis and artist Steve McNiven, and it's this version we're going to get in the film – Peter Quill, aka Star-Lord, half-human space adventurer, was alive and well, and very much the snarky, roguish action hero we see in the film, with Drax, Gamora, Rocket and Groot the key supporting cast. It's a book that sings when the characters are all together, bouncing off each other and verbally sparring, and feels like it's treading water when they get spread – as so often – across known space.

Now one of the Big Bads would be Peter Quill's alien father, space dictator from a powerful human-looking alien species called the Spartex – their relationship has become very Luke-and-Vader over the past few years, with pops wanting Pete to join


ANDROMEDA GALAXY, THE SEDYLSIDE
GIVE QUILL A BEAK GAMORA GRIPPIT YOUR CHEST.
WHAT DOES "THAT SUCKS" MEAN?
WHAT IS WRONG WITH THE HOT OF YOU?
HE'S SAYING YOU ARE NOT BEING VERY HELPFUL RIGHT NOW.
AND I'M SAYING JUST
I WOULD LIKE TO THINK FOR A SECOND WITHOUT YOU-YOU-YOU...
WE HAVE TO BUT WE HAVE TO GO TO WORK!
RIGHT NOW!!!
WITHOUT ME MIGHTY
GAMORA, ARE YOU TELLING ME YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND WE NEED A PLAN?
WE ARE ALL OF US COMPLETELY OVERPOWERED AND OUTNUMBERED AND OVERWHELMED.
AND IT'S GOING TO TAKE MORE THAN A SECOND TO PUT A PLAN TOGETHER TO KEEP THE EARTH NOT BECOMING YOUR FATHER'S TOILET!
STOP CALLING HIM MY FATHER.
I JUST NEED A SECOND TO THINK!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU LET HIM LIVE
HOW WHO LET WHO LIVE?
It's this modern take on Guardians that the film is based on.

WHY DIDN'T I KILL HIM WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE?
YOU WANT TO LIVE WITH HIM ALL THOSE YEARS ON THAT FREAKIN' SPACE STATION.
WHY DIDN'T YOU TRY TO KILL HIM WHEN YOU HAD THE CHANCE?

him in ruling the galaxy – while the Badoon are back, as are further unsavoury space species like the Giger's *Alien*-referencing the Brood from old *X-Men* comics. Iron Man has arrived on the team and departed again, Neil Gaiman's old Angela character from *Spawn* made an appearance, the Carol Danvers Captain Marvel is kicking around, and Agent Venom (none other than Flash Thompson, Peter Parker's high school nemesis-turned-pal from '60s *Spider-Man*) is now a Guardian too. Some of the connections being made here are crazy, some logical as you like – but hey, that's Marvel for you.

After a Big Bang of an entrance, the new comic book *Guardians Of The Galaxy* seems to be slightly marking time for the film to arrive, but it remains a fun, handsome title. Its future, however, would seem to depend very much on whether or not Marvel's riskiest cinematic move to date is a hit or not, and it's this that we'll look at next...

12 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY: THE MOVIE

It's not without its challenges: one character's got but three words of dialogue, another is a refugee from Saturday morning cartoons. Yet it's the most eagerly awaited sci-fi epic of the year, and how? Because whatever else it is, *Guardians Of The Galaxy* promises to be fun...

1 THE TONE THEY'RE GOING FOR ISN'T *STAR WARS*...

Though the posters might make it look that way. Instead, says director James Gunn, it's more *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*: a mix of quips, striking characters, cliffhanger situations, and a mad chase around the globe/space to collect powerful artifacts before the bad guys do. It sounds great, and Gunn's appointment – up until now he's been a low budget guy – is an interesting one. Only the uncharitable would mention that he wrote the two *Scooby Doo* movies, and their parallels with *Guardians Of The Galaxy* are nothing if not striking...

2 THE HERO'S A "BIT OF A JERK"

So says Chris Pratt from TV show *Parks And Recreation*, the guy playing Peter Quill, aka Star-Lord. This is a troubled everyman-type – a child abducted into space from '80s Missouri and raised by thieves and smugglers. Think the young Kirk from recent *Star Trek* movies – or any '80s Tom Cruise role – for the right mix of idiot show-off and good guy. Original creator Steve Englehart first introduced the character in a 1976 issue of *Marvel Preview*, and had meant for Star-Lord to go from "unpleasant, introverted jerk to the most cosmic being in the universe", but he left Marvel before he'd seen his plans through, and the character's appearances since (at least until very recently) have been sporadic indeed.

By Matt Bielby

3 MONARCH OF PLANET X

Groot first appeared before the *Fantastic Four*, even, in one of Marvel's old monster comics: he was a sentient alien tree invader from Planet X, with a penchant for experimenting on humans, first seen in a 1960 issue of *Tales To Astonish*. He'd reappeared a couple of times over the years, but it wasn't until 2006 that he was reworked as a good guy, his relationship with tree-dwelling Rocket becoming a key endearing factor in *Guardians Of The Galaxy*. His only dialogue – he says "I am Groot!" constantly – makes you wonder whether someone at Marvel wasn't a fan of the similarly stoic Hodor in *A Song Of Ice And Fire*.

4 ROCKET IS NOT A CARTOON CHARACTER

Don't laugh, but director James Gunn claimed to have worked with real raccoons to get the feel for him right: "It's not *Bugs Bunny* in the middle of *The Avengers*," he said, "it's a real, little, somewhat mangled beast that's alone." Rocket is both *Guardians*' riskiest character and its secret weapon: will this psychotic procyonid irritate audiences, or enchant them?

5 THE ORIGINAL GUARDIANS DO GET A LOOK-IN

In the form of Yondu – founder member of the original 31st century gang – who is here depicted with classic blue skin, but without some of his old "American Indian in space" stylings.

6 DRAX HATES RONAN, NOT THANOS

Jim Starlin created the purple-suited Drax as arch-nemesis to Thanos. He was a regular Earthman whose wife is killed by the rogue Titan but, on seeing this, Thanos's benevolent father, Mentor, puts the guy's mind in a powerful new body, and sends him off on a single-minded mission – kill Thanos. The movie, however, dumps the original purple cape and skull motifs to showcase the impressive build of WWE star Dave Batista, covering his green skin in red tattoos and such: he basically looks like a particularly freaky Roman gladiator chucked into space. Oh yes, and it's Darth Vader figure Ronan the Accuser that did him wrong now, not Thanos.

7 ZOE SALDANA WILL FINALLY BECOME AN ACTION HEROINE

She's a great Lt Uhura in *Star Trek*, but mini-skirts limit her fighting abilities a tad; action films built around her, from *Columbiana* to *The Losers*, never quite took off; and in *Avatar* she's pretty much unrecognisable. As Gamora – alien orphan adopted by Thanos and trained as a top assassin – it's just her with green face paint (et al), and the promise is huge. The ass-kicking starts here.

8 THE ENEMY WITHIN!

Much of '70s Cosmic Marvel was obsessed with the idea of evil doppelgängers. So making Karen Gillen's Nebula, a blue-skinned space pirate with grandiose ambitions, another adopted daughter of Thanos – and one who was brought up and trained alongside Gamora – means a classic green-versus-blue catfight is inevitable.

9 MARVEL REALLY IS MINING JIM STARLIN HERE

Not only do we have Thanos, Gamora, Drax et al, we also have another Infinity Stone – we've seen (or think we've seen) them before in Cap, Thor and Avengers movies, and once he gets the set Thanos will be able to build himself an Infinity Gauntlet, which is bad news for... Well, just about everybody. Regular comic book readers of the early '90s, in particular, may have thought Starlin had milked this particular cow dry in increasingly pointless multi-crossover series such as *Infinity Gauntlet* and *Infinity Crusade*, but apparently not: cinema Marvel thinks there's life in the old glove yet.

10 THINK OF THANOS AS EMPEROR PALPATINE: WITH MUSCLES

In other words, Marvel's cosmic Big Bad will show up but sparingly, first as a hologram – very *Star Wars* – and then to boss about minions/Vader-alikes like Ronan the Accuser and Nebula. Not a lot of screen-time, but we're talking build-up here: this guy – voice by Josh Brolin, visuals by CGI monkeys – has to feel like Sauron for a while longer yet: a dangerous presence, constantly over-shadowing everything, but almost too big for regular folk to take in.

11 IT'S LIBERACE IN SPACE!

Perhaps the riskiest element of the whole thing, for space and camp don't always make good bedfellows, is *Guardians*' use of The Collector, enduring but hokey "Elder Of The Universe" from the comics, who goes about space, well, "collecting" interesting artifacts and life forms. He was briefly seen in the credits of *Thor: The Dark World*, and – as played by Benicio del Toro – is quite the most bizarre figure, described by director James Gunn as "like an outer-space Liberace", which seems about right. Or wrong, we're not sure.

12 FANS OF "COSMIC MARVEL" ARE GOING TO HAVE A FIELD DAY

We see the introduction of the Nova Corps in the form of two minor figures from the comic books played by big name actors: John C Reilly and Glenn Close. And we also have Djimon Hounsou as Korath (an enhanced Kree warrior from '90s *Quasar* comics) too! One thing's clear: fans of Cosmic Marvel are going to be in hog heaven.

TALKING WITH THE TITAN

While Marvel's big screen Thanos is based on Jim Starlin's '70s creation, the writer tells **Stephen Jewell** that it's time to move on...

THE NAME: SO, RUN IS THANOS!
MORE PROPERLY: THANOS THE MAD!
EMPEROR OF ORTIL OF NEAR-PERFECTED TITAN, TYRANT OF OUR SUN, EARTH!
BAH! WHY DO I WASTE MY TIME GLOATING OVER SUCH A PRIMITIVE LIFE-FORM!
REMEMBER WHAT ANXIETY IS - AND DO NOT LOSE HIM TO HIS TIME!
WAIT! I SEE IN YOUR THOUGHTS THAT YOU HAVE SLAIN THE ENTITY KNOWN AS MORTE!
MENTOR KNOWS THE MORTE!
MENTOR SUFFERED CEREBRAL FEEDBACK!
WHILE DOOMED, MORTE'S ASTRAL MATRIX MUST REMAIN IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION!
WHILE DOOMED, MORTE'S ASTRAL MATRIX MUST REMAIN IN SUSPENDED ANIMATION!
AND NOW - MY PERFECT FREEDOM!
FOOL!
A GLOBE OF BLUE SKIES EXISTS ON THE WORLD OF TAU!

NO! IT WILL BE THE MILLIONS OF PEOPLE YOU SHALL ENSLAVE, AS THE MAGUS WHO'VE PAY.
IT WILL BE THE THOUSAND WORLDS YOUR UNIVERSAL EMPIRE OF TYRANNY CONQUERS WHO SHALL PAY FOR YOUR HIGH MORAL STANDARDS.
IT WILL BE THE ZEN-WHOBRIS YOU GENOCIDE AND THE NON-PRODUCTIVE YOU MASSACRE WHO SHALL FOOT THE BILL FOR YOUR
NOE
"LISTEN TO HIM!"
"YES, LISTEN!"
"YES! RELEASE ME!"

HULKING OUT

Starlin begins his four-issue run on *Savage Hulk* with #7 in December. Described as "classic Starlin" it will see the Green Goliath journeying to some freaky places as he comes up against Annihilus, Blastaar and Thanos himself. "I'll be emphasising the Jekyll and Hyde elements of the Hulk and Bruce Banner's relationship but I'm also going to be trying something different," teases Starlin. "So have you ever wondered what happens to Banner while the Hulk's at the wheel?"

Everyone knows that bad guys have more fun. Just ask Jim Starlin. Four decades after he first brought the Avatar of Death to undead life in the pages of February 1973's *Iron Man* #55, the Detroit-born writer/artist is returning to his most iconic creation with a new graphic novel, *Thanos: The Infinity Revelation*. Published in early August, its release will coincide with *Guardians Of The Galaxy*'s much anticipated arrival in cinemas – and the purple-skinned alien tyrant, voiced by Josh Brolin, will play a more prominent part in James Gunn's superhero sci-fi extravaganza than his brief post-credits cameo in *Avengers*.

"To be honest, I find writing a villain much more fun than scripting heroes," laughs Starlin. "Heroes have a pretty limited range as to what they can do and still be heroes. A villain, on the other hand, can do the most outrageous things and still be a villain. Just look at (Starlin's 1990 series) *The Thanos Quest*. The Titan is my way of venting all the dark things that lurk deep within my soul without me having to abuse any small, big-eyed animals."

DEATH BECOMES HIM

Thanos is often compared to DC's cosmic despot Darkseid, but Starlin actually came up with the idea for him six months before he made his Marvel debut, weaving him into a three-issue stint on *Iron Man*. "The inspiration for Thanos and his brother, Eros, came from a psychology class I took after I got out of the (military) service," recalls Starlin, who denies drawing influence from the similarly-named Greek god of death, Thanatos. "The source of Thanos's origin is Freudian more than anything else."

After his guest-spot on *Iron Man*, Starlin was offered his first regular assignment at Marvel, assuming the plotting and pencilling reins of *Captain Marvel* from issue #25. At that time in the company's history, Captain Marvel was a Kree military officer called Mar-Vell (several other characters have taken up the mantle in the years since). Starlin embarked upon an ambitious intergalactic storyline that has helped to set the stall for Marvel's currently burgeoning Cosmic line. "There are plenty of stories to read that are set on Earth so placing a tale off-planet sometimes allows you to tell a story that might run into difficulties if set on Earth," says Starlin. "Comics are a commercial medium and market forces effect what you get the chance to consume."

Starlin cites the example of *Dreadstar*, his labyrinthine creator-owned series that launched Marvel's mature imprint Epic Comics in 1982. "Back then, I did a story about incest and I'm certain I couldn't have got it through without having it set in an off-world environment," he reasons. "Otherwise the publisher would have gotten too much flack."

Apart from Thanos, *The Infinity Revelation* will see Starlin once again writing for Gamora and Drax the Destroyer, who made his debut in the same *Iron Man* arc that gave birth to the Mad Titan himself. "The Guardians are something new for me to play with, even though a good number of its members are characters I created," he says. "Of course, Drax is greatly changed – I think for the better – since I first guided his path. The rest of it was like going back to visit with old friends. Readers of the graphic novel will discover that all of these characters have an unexpected twist to them in this tale while the Annihilators – what a name! – will also put in an appearance."

Above left: Thanos has been around for longer than people think – he made his first appearance in *Iron Man* #55 in 1973

Below: Starlin's pencilling his own script, collaborating with inker Andy Smith

BIG REVEAL

The Infinity Revelation is the second instalment in a much bigger story that began in Starlin's recent *Thanos Annual* and will take in his upcoming run on *Savage Hulk* before concluding with a further two graphic novels. Starlin is quite cryptic about what we can expect. "As the title suggests, *The Infinity Revelation* is about discoveries," he teases. "Right from the start, Thanos is busy learning things and encountering puzzles. The biggest reveal, though, doesn't come until the very end."

Starlin has stated that both Marvel's current comic book incarnation and his movie equivalent are derived from the Thanos that he depicted in the '70s. He seems philosophical about *Guardians Of The Galaxy*'s imminent big screen outing, though, perhaps because he hopes that it will ease the way for the *Dreadstar* film that *We Are The Millers* producer JC Spink is currently developing. "He told me this past week that he's fairly certain he's found the studio, which will become *Dreadstar*'s home," he says. "Now we can begin trying to figure out where exactly in the sprawling *Dreadstar* saga the movie should begin, as I'm definitely set on not starting out with The Metamorphosis Odyssey."

Starlin's graphic novel, ***Thanos: The Infinity Revelation****, is out in August.*

Avengers images © Marvel

IT'S ALL KICKING OFF FOR COMICS

Kickstarter comics: communism in action or a licence to print pish? **Michael Molcher** asks whether crowdfunded comics are the future for indie creators

Depending on who you talk to, Kickstarter is either the saviour or the bane of the comic book industry

Launched in 2009, the website's popularity has lead to it becoming synonymous with the very idea of crowdfunding – a site that allows users to appeal for funding for projects as diverse as comics, fashion, technology and theatre, the aim being to reach the preferred total within a month or 60-day campaign.

According to *Publisher's Weekly*, there were 1,401 Kickstarter comics projects launched in 2013, which generated $12.5m in pledges. At the time of writing – mid-June – there were more than 4,100 Kickstarter comics appeals running. That's a massive increase. Kickstarter, it seems, has become the go-to platform for comic creators keen to see their ideas in print, from webcomics to print comics, anthologies to epics, floppies to trades, it's fans who are now funding their reading choices directly – cutting out the comic book publishers and stores.

SCEPTICISM

But away from the high-profile projects from established talents, what does Kickstarter mean for grass roots creators, those without major audiences or who are locked out of the commercial mainstream?

Webcomic creator Charlie 'Spike' Trotman had her first experience of Kickstarter the year it launched, when the concept was unproved and there was significant scepticism about the concept. Her comic book guide to frugal living, *Poorcraft*, set a $6,000 target and wound up raising $13,000. "That was it," she said. "I was a believer. I'd never needed any convincing to begin with, but that experience turned me evangelical."

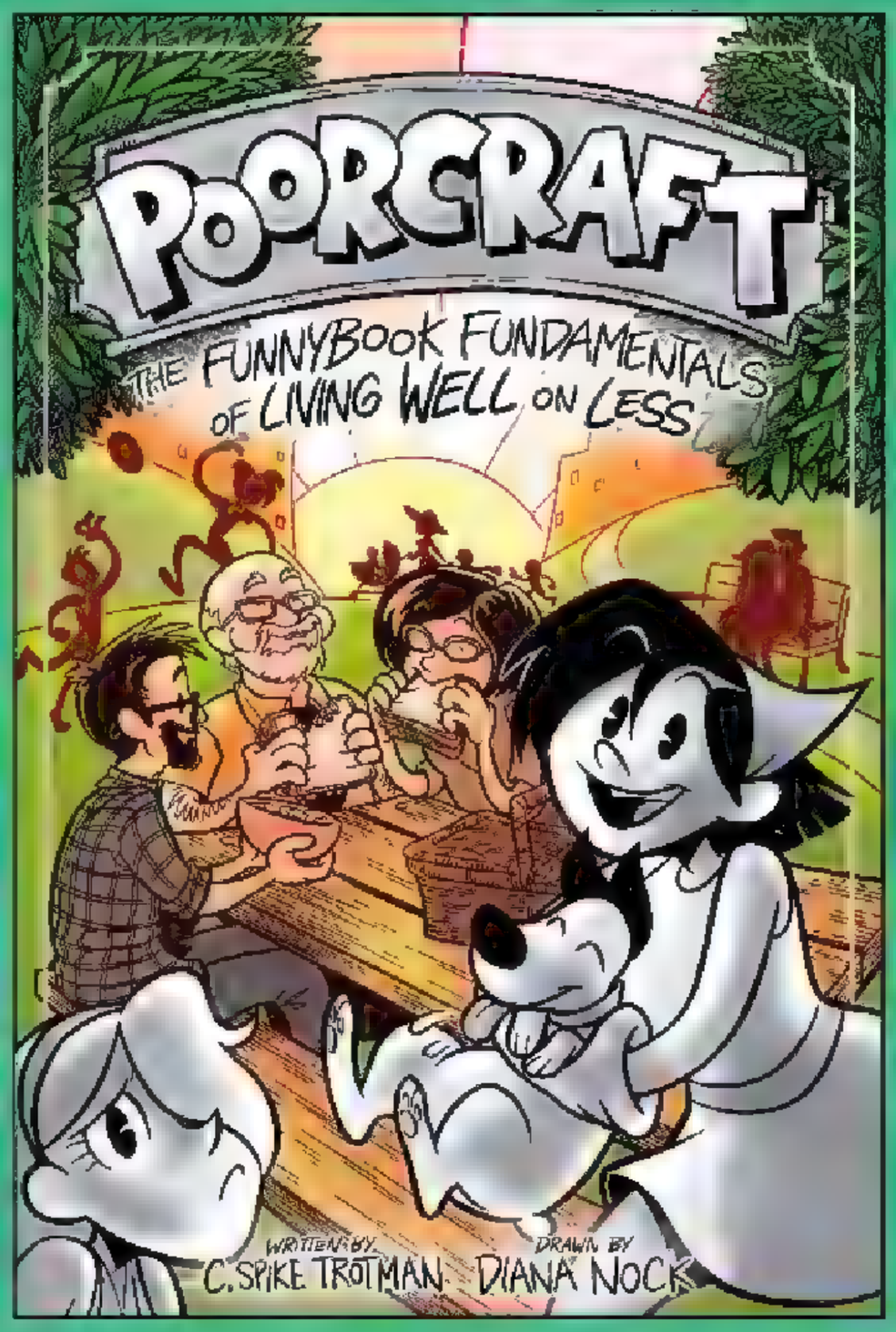
She has since run several successful Kickstarters and recently distilled her advice into a PDF ebook (http://tinyurl.com/lkwt9a7) called *Let's Kickstart A Comic (And Not Screw It Up)*.

The appeal of Kickstarter, she says, is that it bypasses the age-old gatekeepers of the comics industry – editors. "They decided what got published, what got the spotlight, and what got rejected. And sometimes, what got rejected was turned down for reasons that had nothing to do with quality or merit. Before the likes of Kickstarter, all you could do was keep knocking on doors, keep submitting portfolios. It was vanishingly rare for a creator to independently publish at a profit. Even those who published through established houses weren't guaranteed living wages.

> KICKSTARTER IS A HUGE BOON TO COMICS. IT ABSOLUTELY ENABLES CREATORS TO DO THEIR OWN PROJECTS ON THEIR OWN TERMS

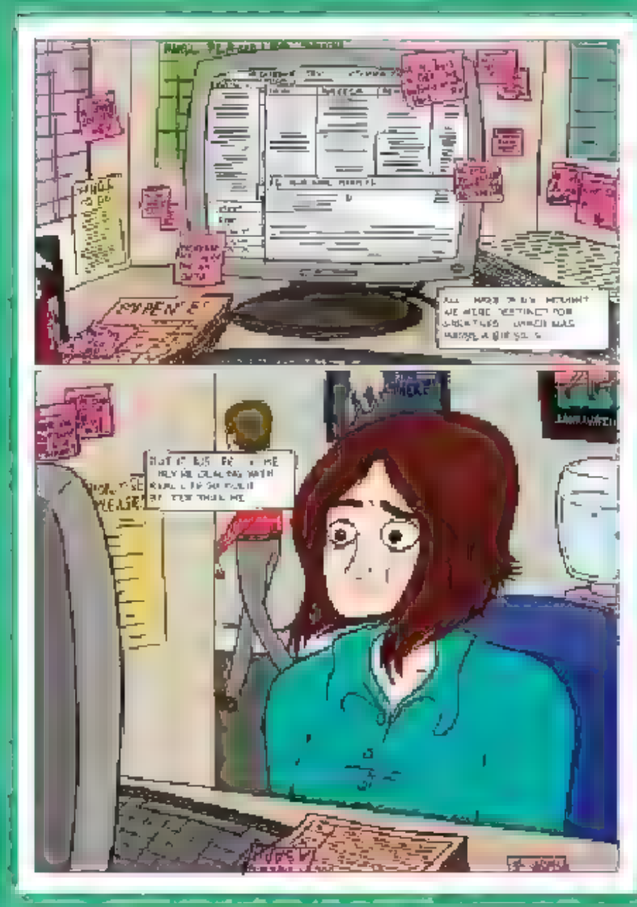
COOKING 101: QUICK TIPS!
ALWAYS SALT WATER GENEROUSLY BEFORE YOU BOIL PASTA. IT SHOULD TASTE LIKE SEAWATER.
MOST CHEFS WOULD RECOMMEND YOU USE 5-6 QUARTS FOR A POUND OF PASTA.
BUT YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH ONE QUART IF YOU WATCH THE POT AND STIR WELL.
AND ON THE TOPIC OF BOILING, A LOT OF VEGGIES GET A BAD RAP BECAUSE EVERYONE PREPARES 'EM INCORRECTLY.
TRY OVEN-ROASTING BRUSSEL SPROUTS, CAULIFLOWER, AND CARROTS, SAUTÉEING SPINACH AND KALE, AND GRILLING EGGPLANT BEFORE YOU DECIDE FOR SURE YOU DON'T LIKE 'EM.
BLURBLE
ONCE YOU GET SOME COOKING EXPERIENCE, YOU CAN START CONSIDERING RECIPES AS SUGGESTIONS RATHER THAN INSTRUCTIONS. THE INTERNET IS A GREAT REFERENCE FOR SUBSTITUTIONS—SWAPPING ONE INGREDIENT FOR ANOTHER. GREAT IF YOU'RE SHORT ON AN INGREDIENT...
CILANTRO
CELERY LEAVES
OR JUST THINK IT TASTES AWFUL.
AND REMEMBER TO LEARN ABOUT SPICE FAMILIES!
FOR EXAMPLE, SESAME OIL, SOY SAUCE, GINGER, AND GARLIC ARE POPULAR IN CHINESE COOKING, AND GARAM MASALA, CHILIES, CUMIN, AND TURMERIC ARE COMMON IN INDIAN FOOD.
JAPANESE-STYLE ASPARAGUS
IF YOU LOVE A CERTAIN KIND OF CUISINE, DON'T BE AFRAID TO USE ITS FLAVORS!

78



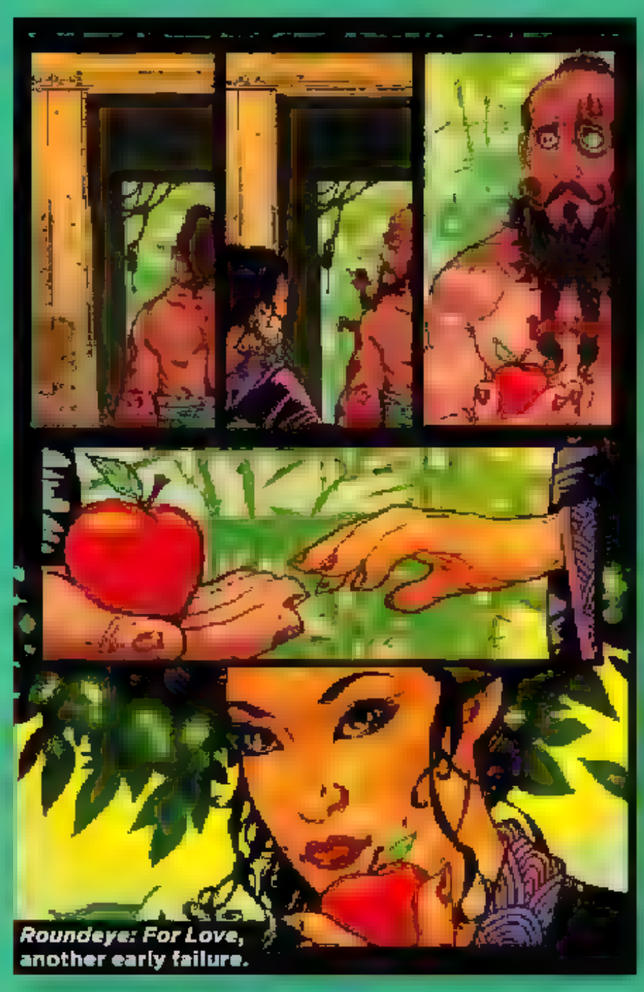
GAMBLE

“IF YOU DON’T HAVE A PUBLISHER TO COVER PRINTING COSTS, WHICH MANY OF US WEBCOMIC FOLK DON’T, IT MEANS MORE THAN I CAN SAY TO HAVE YOUR STOCK PAID FOR UP FRONT” KLEBAN



> FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL (WHO PROBABLY RECALLED MY AFFINITY FOR COMICS AS A KID) DONATED – IT WAS OVERWHELMING

[redacted]



A BRIEF HISTORY OF KICKSTARTER

April 2009 Kickstarter launched by Perry Chen, Yancey Strickler and Charles Adler

October 2012 Kickstarter opened to UK-based projects

February 2012 First Kickstarter projects to break a million dollars: an iPhone dock designed by Casey Hopkins and a computer adventure game from developers Double Fine Productions

April 2012 *Veronica Mars* movie raises $5.7m

May 2012 Pebble: E-Paper Watch raises more than $10m – the most funded project in Kickstarter history

September 2012 Oculus Rift virtual reality headset raises $2.4m

Above: Greg Pak's *Code Monkey Save World* collaboration was funded by a hugely successful Kickstarter

Jonathan's and, to a lesser extent, my existing fans might go nuts for. And we already had direct access to those fans via our mailing lists and social media.

We felt very good about our chances of making our goal. But we didn't expect to pass it in eight hours on day one. Backers literally make our dreams come true – we can't thank them enough."

NO CASH COW

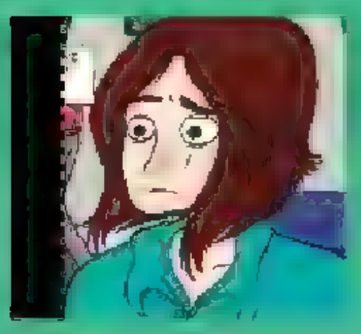
As an established comics professional, Pak says Kickstarter does make things easier for a creator but it isn't a licence to print free money. "Kickstarter is a huge boon to comics. Yes, it absolutely has enabled creators to do their own projects on their own terms. On the most basic level, it provides another option and a viable business plan for an independent comic.

But, of course, it's approximately 100 times harder to run and fulfil a Kickstarter campaign than do a work-for-hire book. When you use Kickstarter for an independent comics project, you become not only the writer and/or artist, you become the editor and project manager and distributor and customer service rep and publicity person and quality control team and accountant and office manager and carrier-of-boxes and stuffer-of-envelopes. You're basically running a massive small business undertaking, which is hugely more time consuming than just writing a work-for-hire script.

"The advantage, of course, is that you're presumably doing this all for a book that you and your collaborators own the rights to as opposed to something someone else owns. But each creator needs to carefully assess the work involved and make sure it makes sense for him or her."

The majority of users do not have the buffer of existing fans to call on for support yet that is part of the beauty of Kickstarter.

"With only a small following, I knew most of my backers would be friends and family," says Liam John McKenna, who recently completed his first Kickstarter for $1,000 to take his self-produced comics to East Coast Comic Expo. "It was nonetheless surprising to see people be »



> "THERE'S STILL A RISK, OF COURSE – IF YOUR PROJECT DOESN'T MAKE TARGET THEN NOTHING GETS MADE AT ALL" RACHAEL SMITH

so generous. A lot of friends I'd known from school donated. They were people I hadn't seen in years, but who probably recalled my affinity for comics when I was a kid and recognised this as a step towards my dream. It was truly overwhelming.

Unlike other crowdsourcing platforms, comics on Kickstarter remain inextricably tied to the end result, a physical object that backers can own; projects that offer only digital rewards rarely find success. This raises an interesting issue for creators of webcomics, allowing them to create a premium product from something normally offered for free.

"The lines are definitely blurring between print and web," said Ashwin. "I've seen many published artists/authors funding their own personal projects outside of the bounds of their publishers, presumably so they can have greater control over the work."

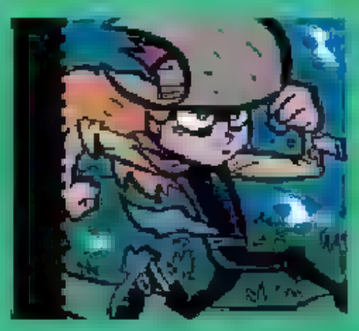
Strangebeard (www.strangebeard.com) creator Kelly Tindall compares Kickstarter to the Xeric Foundation's self-publishing grants set up by *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* co-creator Peter Laird, "but with the added bonus of adding a lot of attention to the webcomic itself. It used to be that you'd have to raise money to print a book and then find a way to market it, but a lot of the initial investment in the fanbase is taken care of by the webcomic itself."

Tindall found most of her backers were friends, family and fans: "Every publisher I spoke with liked the book, but all of them were afraid of publishing an all-ages book, especially one starring a little girl. Most of the backers have families and a lot of my external readership are girls or parents of girls. Something I, for some silly reason, did not anticipate when I started making the strip, but now I consider it a major responsibility to create work that has a more diverse female cast. About 30-40% of my backers came from outside my social media circle, so I couldn't tell you anything about them. Except, I guess, that they have great taste in pirate comics!"

Of the 4,000 plus projects running on the site at this moment, a significant proportion will not make their targets and *Publisher's Weekly* estimated that comic book projects in 2013 saw a success rate of less than 50%.

Spike Trotman says users' reactions to an appeal can be complex: "The fact that gross, impulsive, tacky people have to try to figure out how much you stand to make, and how much of that they think you deserve, has discouraged some artists I know from using Kickstarter at all.

"I've also had friends who launched KS projects that went bad. *Very* bad. They didn't calculate and include shipping costs, they didn't find a printer and obtain a quote. I even know someone who priced out their project so they would take a slight *loss* on every reward shipped, and they *knew* that, but they didn't rectify the problem because they wanted to keep their reward tiers as cheap as possible. They ended up making over $70,000 on a project that asked for $6,000, and facing financial and psychological ruin."

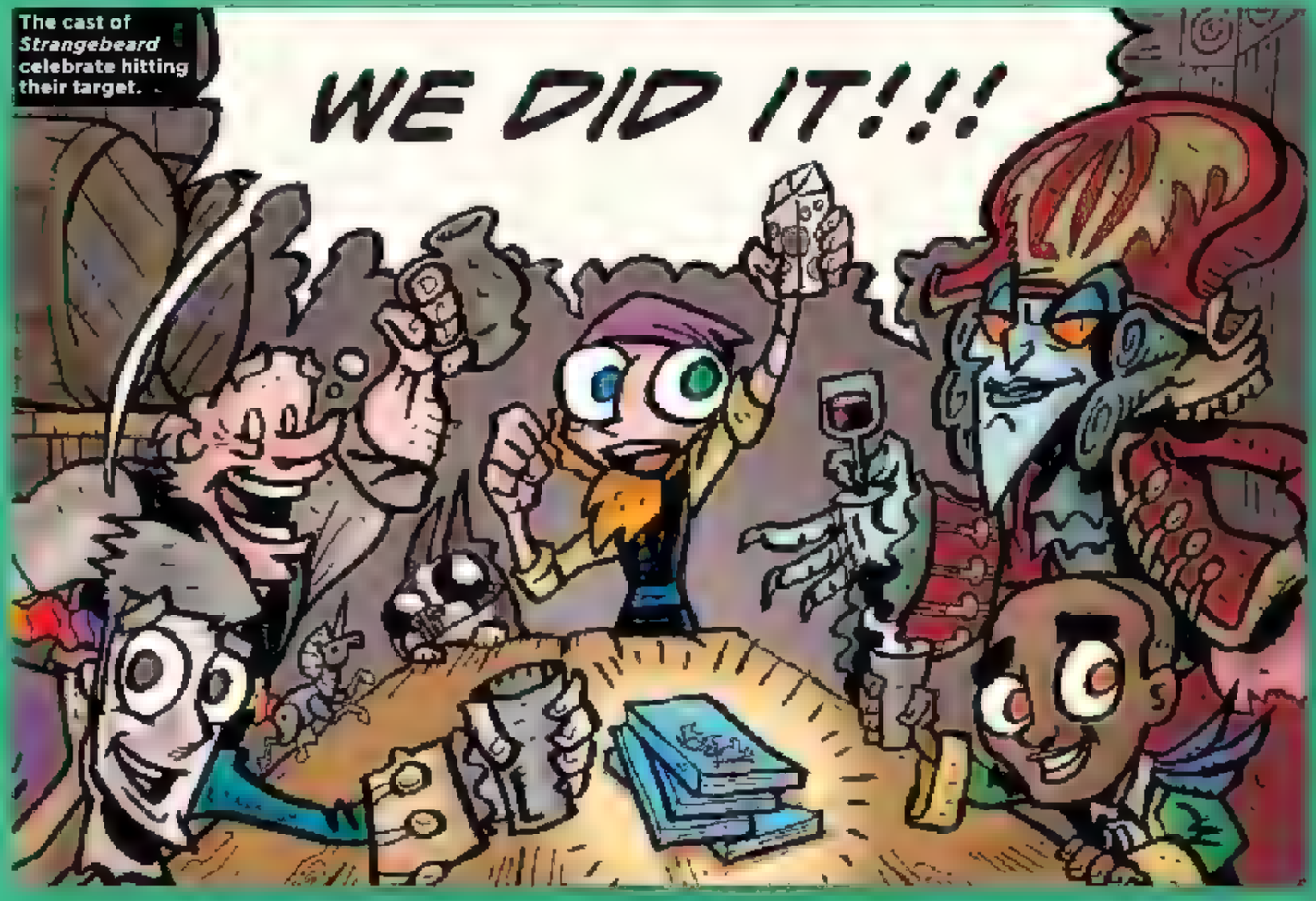


"I'VE HAD FRIENDS WHO LAUNCHED KS PROJECTS THAT WENT VERY BAD. THEY ENDED UP FACING FINANCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RUIN" SPIKE TROTMAN

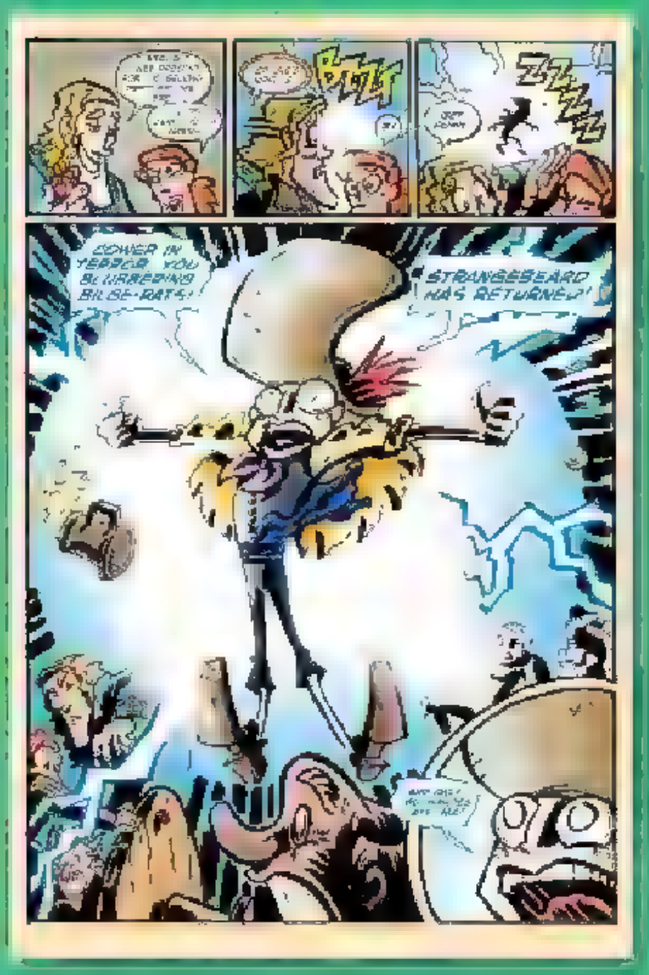
HIDDEN COSTS

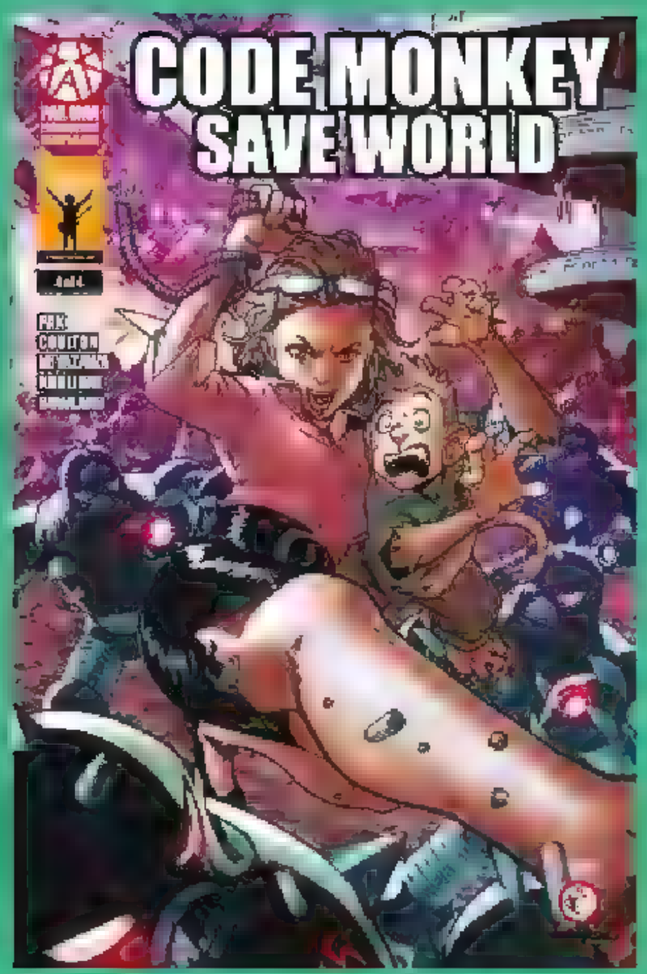
Meanwhile, the postal system and its costs can remain a weak link in the Kickstarter chain, with stories abounding of underestimating postage or rises in international costs crippling creators.

"We posted hundreds of books around the world," says Darrin O'Toole, "but every



The cast of *Strangebeard* celebrate hitting their target.





single time we posted to Australia, the parcels vanished… every time! So you have to prepare for this."

"I found that Kickstarter wasn't super clear on one thing: the time it takes to process your funds. It's covered in the FAQs, but it's still lacking in clarity," says George Wassil. "My KS closed on 17 May, and I received my funds on 6 June. I anticipated two weeks based on the FAQ, so to end up closer to three was alarming. And it takes a while for the bank to process after KS is done confirming the order.

"To be honest we severely undercharged for postage too," says O'Toole. "The other issue only applied to 0.01% of our backers, most of whom were outstanding and offered amazing support to push the book. But doing a Kickstarter opens the doors to your readers in both good and bad ways. Thankfully, as I said, it was by and large a positive experience, but the odd person took a step too far in terms of constantly contacting creators."

"I was lucky enough to be able to take advice from friends who'd already run Kickstarters," says Kate Ashwin. "I tend to keep my extra rewards somewhat grounded so it can all be completed in a timely manner, which lowers the stress factor."

"I'd also recommend thinking very carefully about rewards that require extra work," adds Pak. "The objective is to make the original object/thing you're Kickstarting, not to spend weeks and months creating personalised ancillary products. Extra rewards are fun and often essential to achieving the needed levels for many projects. But it's worth really thinking through the time commitment created by each individual reward and making sure it makes sense."

Away from the nitty gritty of running an appeal, what does Kickstarter mean for the future of comics? Everyone is in no doubt that the answer is simply "freedom".

"For good or bad it has eliminated the filters that have existed in the past so it's given us a way to go directly to a lot of people we would otherwise never come in contact with," says Wassil.

Smith adds: "It certainly gives you a lot of freedom to create your project the way you want to. There's still a risk, of course… if your project doesn't make target then nothing gets made at all. If you're a single creator working by yourself then that's an awful lot of pressure."

Trotman is convinced that Kickstarter and other services like it, are going to make an independent art career even more feasible. "When I was a teenager, going it alone was so much more difficult. Now, it's something recent graduates and aspiring artists simply expect. Professional independents are no longer the exceptions that prove the rule, they're becoming business as usual. And the whole world of comics is scrambling to adjust to that. I once said that we're living in a comics renaissance and I stand by that. Comics haven't been this interesting and diverse and unfettered since ever. Kickstarter is helping to facilitate that. I can't wait to see how things are in five years."

As more and more creators take the plunge and begin putting their appeals together, what advice do those who've been through it have?

Greg Pak says that research is key: "Hundreds of comic book makers have run successful (and unsuccessful) Kickstarters and a huge number of those people have provided fantastic advice and information online. I'd also say *do not rush*. Take your time to really plan it out and you will save yourself a lot of trouble."

"Show it to people every step of the way," says Smith. "Getting someone else to proof your stuff is so, so important. And once your project is live, don't expect it to look after itself. Promote the hell out of it."

Although now seemingly ubiquitous, Kickstarter is undoubtedly the first blossoming of crowdfunding and its effects on the comics industry are only just beginning to be felt.

"It's a lot more settled," says Trotman. "Less slapdash, less hysterical. Fewer people are in a rush to get their projects up and nobody thinks the site is going away anytime soon. The cries of 'Kickstarter is OVER!' and 'random legislation or failed project) will be the death of Kickstarter!' are fewer and farther between, unless someone's got an axe to grind. And no one feels the need to defend their use of KS anymore. That's refreshing!" CH

Top Tips From The Experts

What stone-cold advice would successful Kickstarters give to newbies? We asked our panel of creators

GEORGE WASSIL "What was awesome about using Kickstarter was how interested they were in the success of my project. Before it went live, they personally reviewed my project and gave me advice. Specifically, they said that projects that didn't have a clear goal weren't successful a lot of the time, and the open-ended nature might not entice people to donate. They did say the small amount made success more likely, and that little additions like a good video and images would help. They were right on all counts."

GREG PAK "Be sure that the thing you're trying to fund is one of your affordable rewards. If you want to do a graphic novel, that should be offered as a reward somewhere around the $25-$40 level. Start small: try raising a few thousand for a small project that you can actually finish. Build up from there."

DARRIN O'TOOLE "Be imaginative! Our most expensive rewards were the personalised ones. 'Get killed in the book' and 'Your name on a tombstone' were snapped up extremely fast. People will pay to be a part of the project, so try to include them with rewards and try to avoid being generic with your rewards."

KATE ASHWIN "International postage costs more than you think! I know it's a chore, but work out how much postage you'll have to pay and add it into the pledge tiers or you'll be kicking yourself later."

RACHAEL SMITH "I used social media *a lot* – which lots of people do, but I also made flyers and sent little bundles of them to comic shops with handwritten notes asking the owners very nicely to put them out on their counters. I also flyered at comic conventions and put them in with other comic orders."

KELLY TINDALL "Talk to people who have had success in the past, and learn from them. There are no bad questions, just bad decisions. Also, hire people who are more talented and popular than you to help you work on the book. You see this time and time again with successful comics Kickstarters."

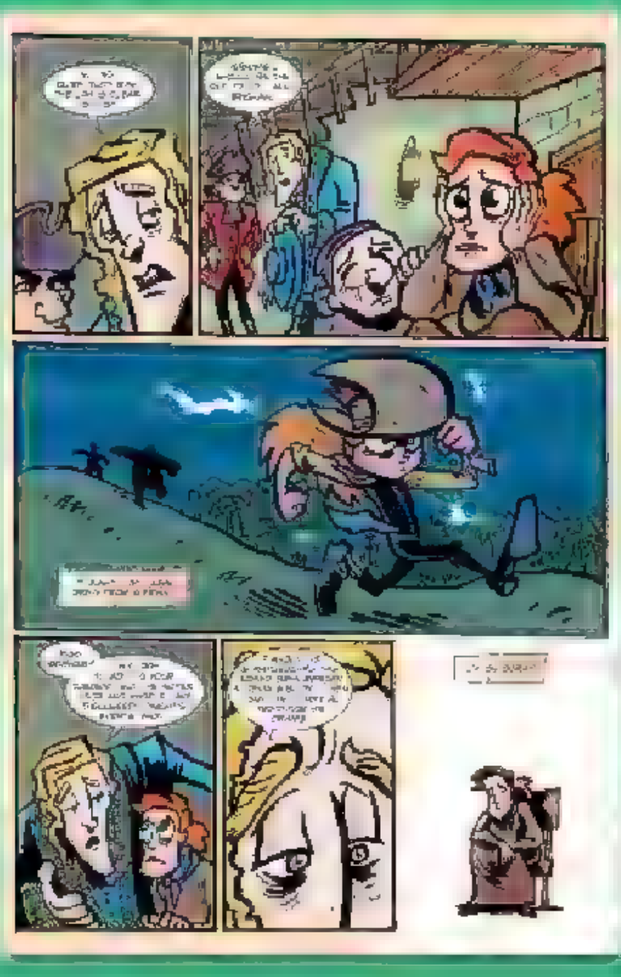
KICKSTARTER IN 2013

Three million people pledge $480m

That works out at $913 a minute

Backers came from 214 countries and territories, including Antarctica

19,911 successful projects



Left: Kelly Tindall's *Strangebeard*

COMICS UNMASKED
THE CO-CURATOR'S BEST IN SHOW

To coincide with his Comics Unmasked exhibition, **Paul Gravett** selects his Top Ten examples of comic book art

After two years spent rummaging through the British Library's vast comics collection in London, co-curator John Harris Dunning and I have cherry-picked about 200 items to display in Comics Unmasked: Art And Anarchy In The UK. Simply this country's largest ever exhibition of British comics spanning centuries, it's arranged in six sections exploring themes such as society, politics, sex, heroes and altered states, and continues daily till August 19. From Jamie Hewlett's sassy new mascot Lawless Nelly to Dave McKean's brilliant design concepts; from prints, publications, scripts, sketches and original artwork to artefacts, audio and video clips, webcomics and Sequential's iPad samplers, it's really tough to choose, but here's my personal Top Ten. And don't miss the final weekend, August 15-17, when Comica Festival presents a free Comiket Fair and a programme of celebrity panels and signings, including Bryan Lee O'Malley and Emmanuel Guibert (see World of Comics, page 116).

1. A PAUPERS' BIBLE: THE APOCALYPSE, 1470

How far back do comics actually go? We haven't excavated any cave paintings for the exhibition but uncovering this exceptionally rare Medieval Bible was a revelation. Its striking imagery of angels battling demons, its bright block colours and carved narrative texts, even its page format are uncannily close to modern comic books. Despite the name, Paupers' Bibles were not owned by the poor but by priests and monks, who may have used them to teach the illiterate to read, and by wealthier lay people to meditate on while praying. Maybe reading comics has always been something of a religious experience?

Image © British Library Board

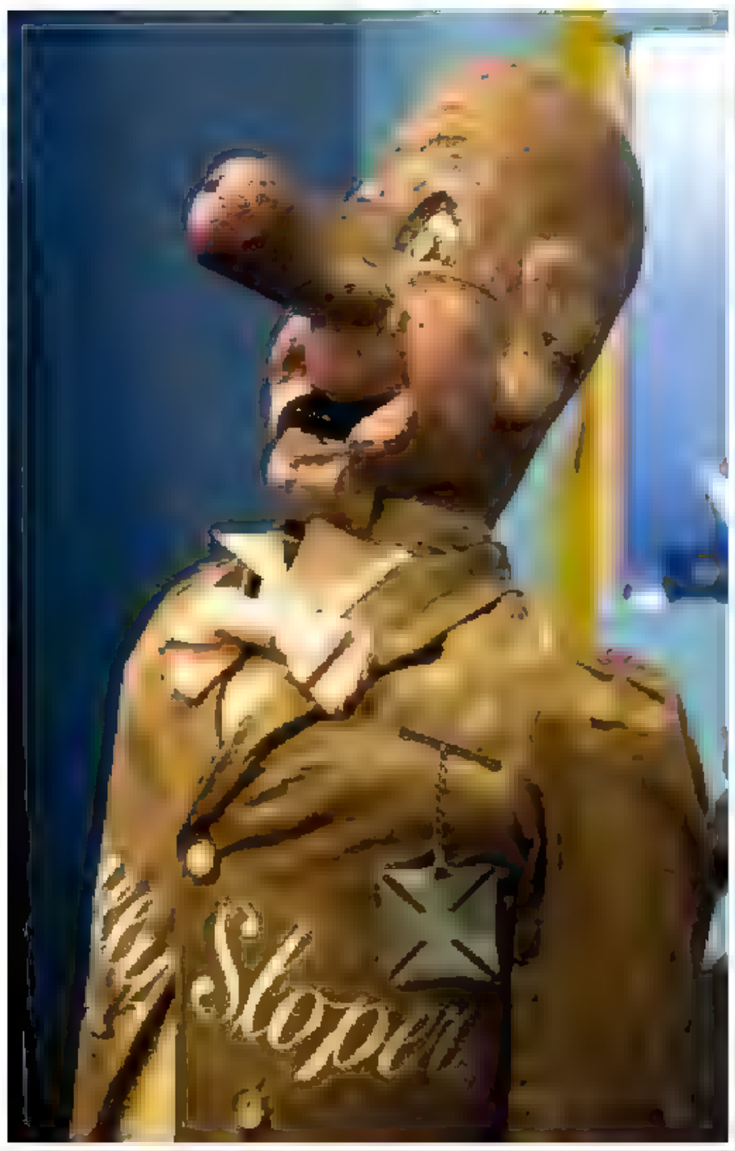


Image courtesy of Roger Sabin, photography © Tony Antonio

2. THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS, 1888

Hold the front page! You can feel East Enders' panic pulsating through this docu-comics reportage about Jack the Ripper's murder spree. Was *The Illustrated Police News* pandering to the morbid or providing an anxious public with vital information and even assisting the police manhunt? One thing is sure, the grisly details shifted thousands more copies. These weekly covers would serve as period reference to Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell for their Ripper autopsy *From Hell*.

3. ALLY SLOPER VENTRILOQUIST'S DUMMY, c. 1890s

All but forgotten now, the bulbous-nosed Cockney scoundrel was the Spider-Man of his day, star of the world's biggest-selling comic, *Ally Sloper's Half-Holiday*, shifting up to half a million copies a week. His multi-media crossovers included two of the earliest British live-action films in 1898 (sadly lost), masses of merchandise, much of it unauthorised, popular songs and music hall appearances by comedy impersonators. Another popular spin-off was the ventriloquist Professor Nomis, stage name of Simon Cross, who operated this three-quarter life-size dummy, a miracle that such a fragile rarity has survived.

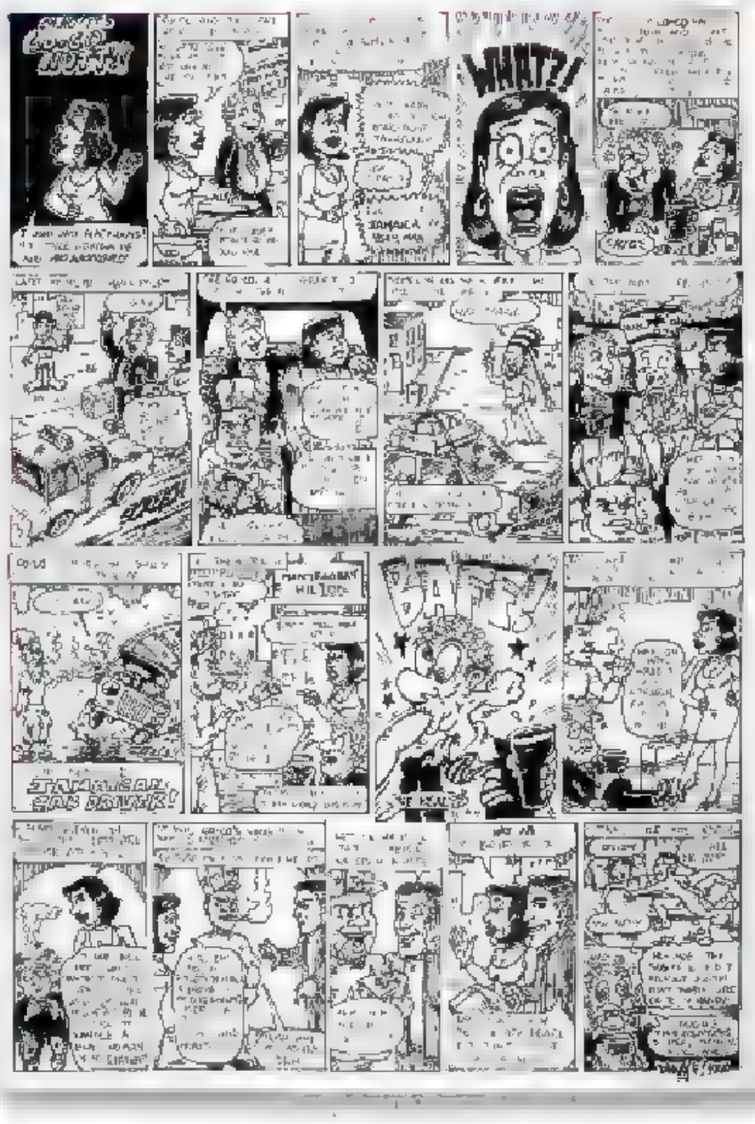


Image courtesy of Bobby Joseph

4. CO-CO NUTT, BLACK EYE, 2002

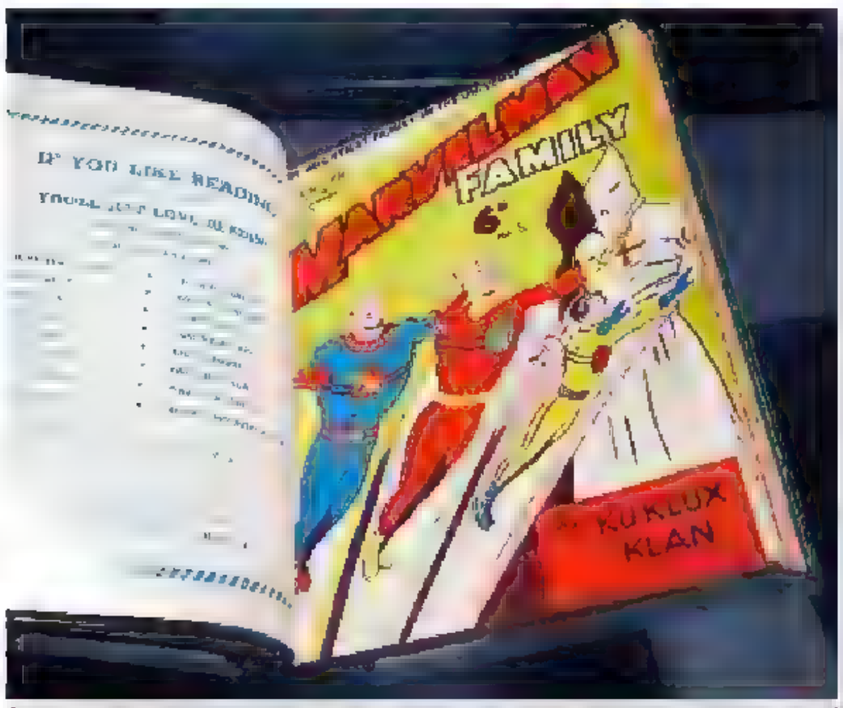
Did you know there was not one, but two black versions of *Viz*? In 1994, riding on the phenomenal sales of *Viz*, 20-year-old comedy writer Bobby Joseph persuaded publishers X-Press to try *Skank*, the first adult comic by and about British blacks. Joseph was forced to close when athlete Linford Christie sued for libel, but he bounced back in 2002 with *Black Eye*. He lent to the British Library the original artwork by Daniel Francis for this episode of the money-hungry "brown sugar" Co-Co Nutt, in which she has to contend with sex, drugs and Robert de Niro while vacationing in funky Jamaica.

»

5. 'WHAT A WOMAN MAY BE', SUFFRAGETTE POSTER, 1913

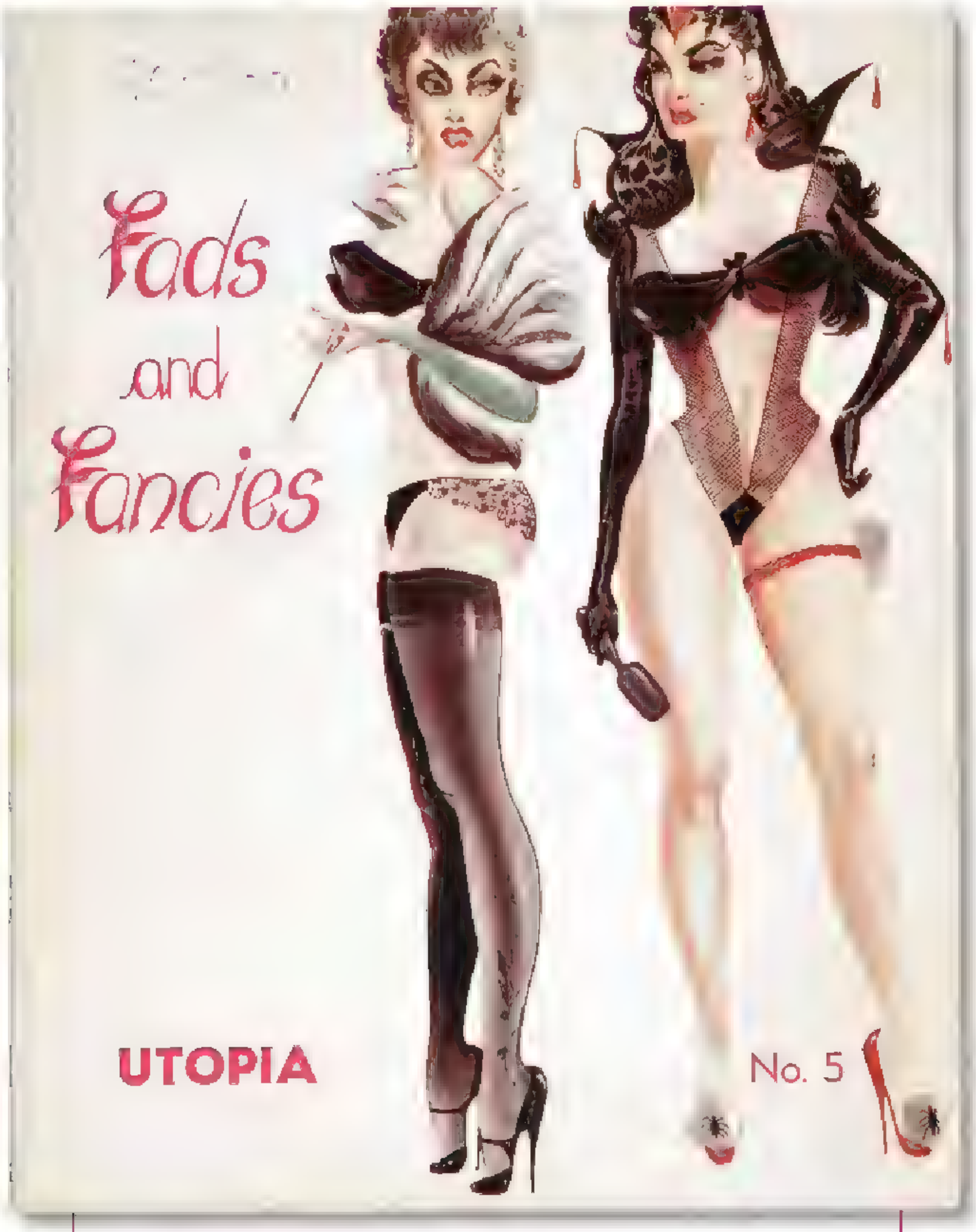
A century ago, as part of the suffragettes' long-fought campaign for the vote for women, the Suffrage Atelier was founded in February 1909 in Shepherd's Bush, to design and print its own low-cost posters and postcards. This persuasive woodcut print by an unknown female artist uses two rows of panels to starkly contrast the women in responsible roles, who were denied suffrage, with the male prisoners, lunatics, drunkards and others who were still entitled to vote. This rare and timely reminder was loaned by the V&A.

"One of the goals for this exhibition is to unearth and honour forgotten comics creators"



6. MARVELMAN FAMILY NO. 16, c. 1958

The hooded lynch mob, the Ku Klux Klan, were conspicuously absent as villains in US superhero comic books and popped up in just one episode of the *Superman* radio show. London in the summer of 1958 saw a large mob of white people attacking West Indian residents. Perhaps to address the Notting Hill race riots, British creators Mick Anglo and Don Lawrence concocted this well-meaning if heavy-handed story showing the Marvelman Family intervening at a university in America's Deep South, where 'coloured' students are being terrorised by the Klan. Our white superheroes disguise their identities by blackening their faces and trick the Klansmen, unmasking their leader as a respected citizen.



7. 'THE ADVENTURES OF DELIA', 1950

One of the goals for this exhibition is to unearth and honour forgotten comics creators. So it was a thrill to discover pioneering erotic illustrator Reina Bull working under her pen-name Janine in *Fads And Fancies*, an adult mail order fetish magazine. Written by "Aubrey Lamonte" (probably a saucy pseudonym), "The Adventures Of Delia" presented generously proportioned heroines trussed up in exquisitely painful-looking outfits and the titular heroine perpetually in peril. As an artist-for-hire Janine also provided memorable covers for sci-fi magazines and pulp fiction books for Todd Publishing, including titles by Agatha Christie and Daphne du Maurier.

16
HHEY HEY I DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING...
I, UM I HAVEN'T BEEN IN THE APPLE TOO LONG, AND I
I, UH
HEY WHAT..?
AAAAAA
I'VE JUST BROKEN THIS GENTLEMAN'S LITTLE FINGER.
WHO KILLED EDWARD BLAKE?
OW. OUHH.
EEYIAAA
..AND HIS INDEX FINGER
WHO K..LED EDWARD BLAKE?
PLEASE.
PLEASE, WE DON'T KNOW.
AW GOD, MAN LEAVE HIM ALONE..
FIRST VISIT OF EVENING ERUDITESS NOBODY KNEW ANYTHING FEEL SLIGHTLY DEPRESSED
THIS CITY IS DYING OF BOREDOM. IS THE BEST I CAN DO TO WIPE RANDOM FLECKS OF FOAM FROM ITS LIPS?
HURM.
NEVER DESPAIR. NEVER SURRENDER
I LEAVE THE HUMAN COCKROACHES TO DISCUSS THEIR HEROIN AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY. I HAVE BUSINESS ELSEWHERE, WITH A BETTER CLASS OF PERSON.
19
6

8. WATCHMEN #1, PAGE 16 & SCRIPT, 1986

Once read, never forgotten, this is in many ways the key page from this landmark interrogation and deconstruction of the might-is-right genre. Vigilante superheroes had been punching baddies for decades in American Code-approved comics but with no sense of any real effect. Here was psychotic loner Rorschach snapping a hapless hood's pinkie. In comic book terms, a minor act of cruelty, but a major shock conveying genuine pain and horror. To accompany the stunning full-scale original art, co-creator Dave Gibbons generously lent scans of his annotated copy of Alan Moore's script for these nine intense panels.

9. THE JOKER MASK FROM ARKHAM ASYLUM, 1989

By taking a surprising, subversive outsider's perspective, the Brit Pack seem to have developed a special love-hate relationship with America's superhero icons. In their seminal graphic novel *Arkham Asylum*, Grant Morrison and Dave McKean twisted the never-ending battle between Batman and the Joker into a provocative, magic-inspired psychodrama. As well as displaying Morrison's original outline script and one of Aleister Crowley's painted tarot cards incorporated into the book, we were lucky enough to borrow this grimacing model of the Joker's face which McKean modelled and photographed for his stunning pages.

10. SHE LIVES, 2014

The grand finale of Comics Unmasked explores musical, animated, digital and installation forms of 21st century comics. Woodrow Phoenix's *She Lives* stands as perhaps the ultimate comic as art object, an unpublished, if not unpublishable one-metre-square gigantic book whose single copy can only exist in its original form as page after thick, crinkly page of inky black-and-white artwork. Normally housed inside a glass cabinet, Woodrow is allowing the public to follow the whole wordless, electrifying tale in communal page-turning readings at 6pm on July 22 and August 12.

COMPETITION!

12 COPIES OF

THE GRAPHIC NOVEL MAN

THE COMICS OF BRYAN TALBOT

Six DVDs and six HD digital downloads of this great documentary series on the creator of *Luther Arkwright* and *Grandville* to be won

The Graphic Novel Man: The Comics Of Bryan Talbot is a series of documentaries which explores the development of acclaimed writer/artist Bryan Talbot. The documentaries trace not only his career, but explore how his deep knowledge of the craft of making comics has made him an international phenomenon at the epicentre of graphic novel innovation.

Talbot's career includes his psychedelic underground comic *Brainstorm!*, *The Adventures Of Luther Arkwright* (arguably Britain's first graphic novel) and freelancing for *2000 AD* on strips such as *Nemesis The Warlock* and *Judge Dredd*. For DC he's worked on *Batman*, *Sandman* and *Hellblazer*. But he's best known for his own creations, such as *The Tale Of One Bad Rat*, *Heart Of Empire*, *Alice In Sunderland*, the *Grandville* series and the 2013 Costa Award-winning *Dotter Of Her Father's Eyes* (co-created with his wife Mary).

Featuring contributions from some of the world's greatest comic creators – such as Neil Gaiman, Joe Sacco, Warren Ellis, Gilbert Shelton, Ian Rankin, David Lloyd, Pat Mills, John Wagner, Charlie Adlard, Carlos Ezquerra, D'Israeli, Doug Braithwaite and Andy Diggle – and leading critics and comic historians – including Paul Gravett, Kim Newman, Professor Henry Jenkins and Dr Mel Gibson – *The Graphic Novel Man* also boasts unprecedented access to previously unseen material.

To be in with a chance of winning a copy of *The Graphic Novel Man: The Comics Of Bryan Talbot*, you simply need to answer the following question correctly:

What is the name of the badger detective currently starring in Talbot's *Grandville* series of graphic novels?

A) Detective Inspector LeBrock of Scotland Yard

B) Detective Inspector LeBoeuf of the Gendarmerie

C) Detective Inspector LeCock of The Yard

To submit your answer, please go online to:
https://www.futurecompetitions.com/talbot/

Please note this competition will only be live from 18 July to 18 August 2014. Winners will be chosen at random from the correct entries.

THE VIEW FROM A BOARD

A childhood dream comes true for comic artist **Mike Perkins**

An early Perkins Deathlok.

I've been drawing Deathlok since I was eight years old.

Not in a professional sense, of course. I'm not Steve Dillon or Sean Phillips who seem to have had gorgeous work published since the moment they left the womb. But for me, even from that early age, there was something visually enticing about the character – something that pulled me towards him. Maybe it's that sense of punk anarchy that was so prevalent in *2000 AD*... and, yes, I know that Deathlok pre-dates the anthology comic but that's not to say that the Demolisher – as he was otherwise known – could not have easily found a home within its pages.

Here was a comic character who evaded the clean-cut, cleft-chinned caricatures prevalent throughout American comics. This was a soldier who was half dead, ugly to look at, enhanced by cybernetics and with a chattering computerised intelligence constantly informing him of possible outcomes and damages to his system. A unique observation of heroism – uncompromising, unafraid and a little bit cerebral.

I was introduced to him through the pages of the *Marvel Two-In-One* series during the classic storyline "The Pegasus Project", although I have a niggling feeling that I must have come across UK reprints of the original *Astonishing Tales* run before those John Byrne-illustrated issues as I vividly remember the Rich Buckler renditions. It may actually have been the US comics that I came across but with their sporadic distribution throughout Britain it's hard to be certain. What is irrefutable though is that I was fascinated by the character throughout his many incarnations... and he's had quite a few.

NOW HE HAS A NEW ONE

I've been given the task, alongside writer Nathan Edmonson, to launch a new Deathlok series. I have to say that I've left enough hints with everyone at Marvel that I'd love to take on Deathlok and try to raise him into the higher echelon of heroes at the company but it's not until you're given the keys to such a vehicle that you're sure that the nudges and intimations you've been giving have fallen on open ears. But they have! I'm ecstatic. It's not just that it's a childhood dream come true, it's also a chance to introduce a new player into the Marvel Universe, albeit borrowing some existing tropes.

Having just read the first script I can guarantee excitement and thrills on a par with any James Bond opening nestling alongside some touching character interludes... but primarily, after the 10-page introduction featuring in the first issue of *Original Sins*, we're attempting to grab the reader by the lapels and thrust them into a world of espionage, secrets, betrayals and action. This is a persona with a clean slate, but accompanied by a history that is anything but spotless

Join us for this new Deathlok ride, I promise you won't be disappointed. That eight-year-old boy lives on inside me – especially when I'm sitting down at my drawing board – and at the moment he's jumping up and down with excitement.

“Here was a character who evaded the clean-cut, cleft-chinned caricatures prevalent in US comics”

Wytch watch

Jock

One of the most famous artists to come out of *2000 AD*, Jock is teaming up with Scott Snyder once more for a startling new take on witchcraft

By Stephen Jewell

BORN EAST KILBRIDE
HIGH DETECTIVE COMICS "THE BLACK MIRROR"
NOW WYTCHES
MORE www.4twenty.co.uk

With a career that encompasses not just comics but also film, advertising, and much sought after work with high-end poster company Mondo, Jock remains one of the industry's standout talents. He's now turning to the dark side courtesy of *Batman* writer Scott Snyder's new Image series that promises a chilling new take on the wizened old witches of legend.

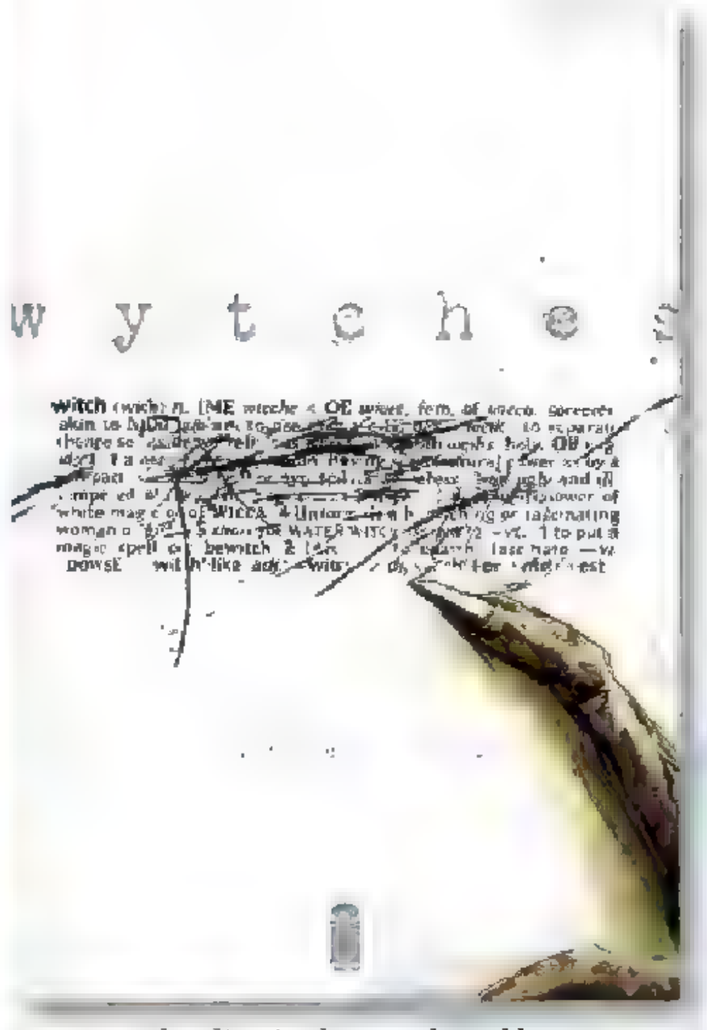
Comic Heroes: You've worked with Scott Snyder before. Did he approach you to work on *Wytches*?

Jock: "Yeah, he did. I was going to be doing some work with another writer which fell through and Scott emailed me that same day, so the timing was fortuitous. We'd worked together on *Batman: The Black Mirror*. We've got a great work relationship, we're good friends, and he came up with the idea for *Wytches*, which is a pure horror story, something Scott excels at; he's an amazing horror writer. There was no way I could say no and as he told me more about the story I just got more excited about it."

CH: Can you give a brief summary of the story?

Jock: "We're doing a re-imagining of the myth of witches; they're not little old ladies with hooked noses and long grey hair like they are in the stories, they're actually more like beasts,

"It's one of those comics that will make people go 'Oh my God'"

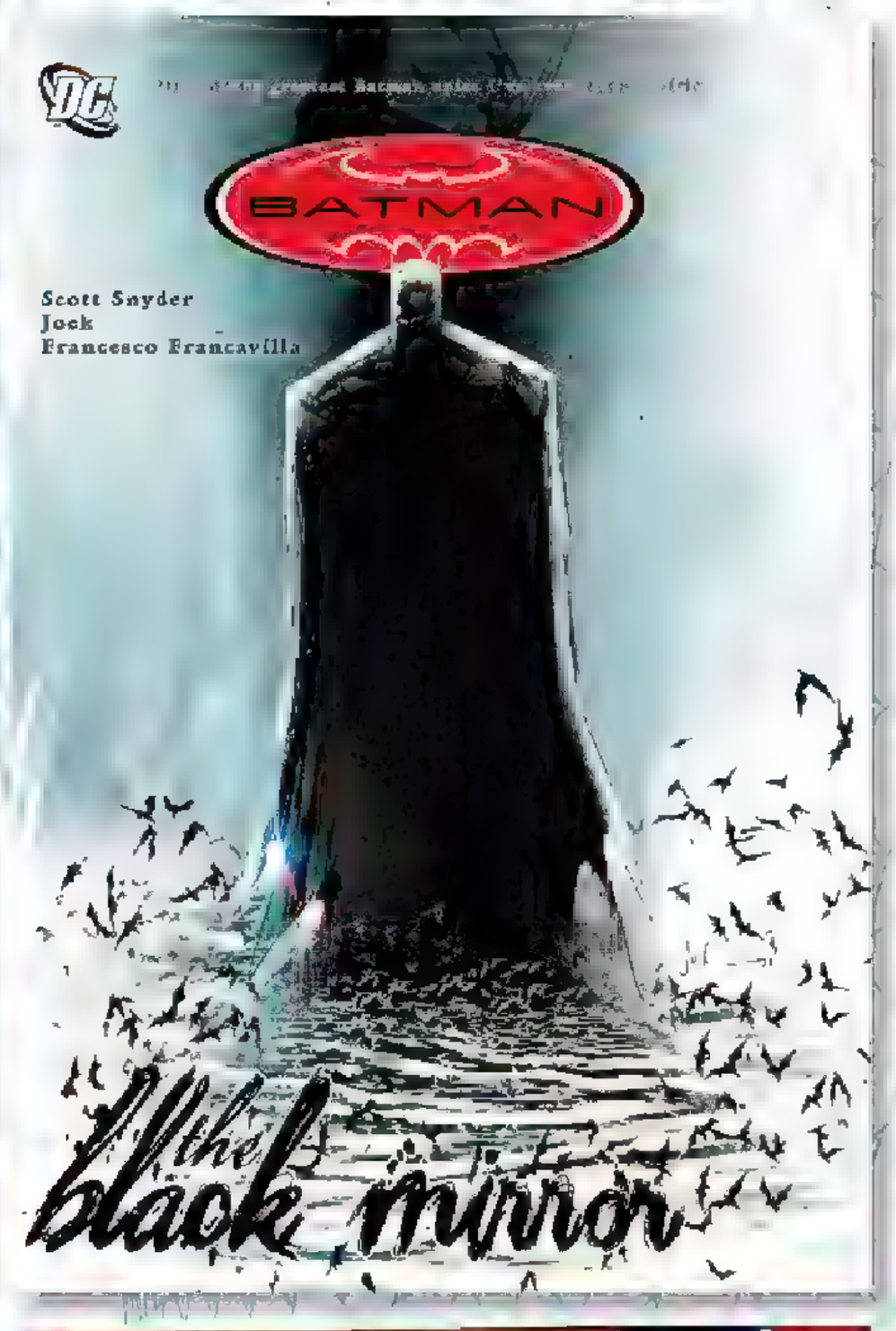


monsters that live in the woods and burrows, really nasty creatures.

"What we previously imagined were witches were actually the people that worshipped these creatures, so the witches themselves don't have magical powers but instead it's all tinctures and the ability to cure diseases; they're steeped in the knowledge of the esoteric and archaic.

"They're tall and thin and hide in the woods. You can't see them but you might just spot a little movement as they peek out from behind a tree. They feed on children so the worshippers have to sacrifice kids to them. Scott has some really, really nasty things

OUTSIDE ADA, OHIO. 2003.
HEY YOU!
AND ONLY THREE HOURS LATE!
GET THE HELL OUT HERE!
IT'S YOUR FAULT. LIVING OUT HERE IN THE DAMN WOODS. WHAT ARE YOU LIKE A "PREPPER" NOW, NANCE? GETTING READY FOR THE END OF THE WORLD?
LAWN ALL BOOBY-TRAPPED. SOME SPIKED LOG READY TO SWING DOWN AND END YOUR POOR BROTHER SHUNK!
IT'S CALLED PRIVACY
PRIVACY. COME HERE, GIRL!
SERIOUSLY, THOUGH, WHAT THE HELL DO YOU DO OUT HERE?... NO NEIGHBORS NO INTERWEBS.
OH.. JUST EAT MOSTLY
WELL, YEAH ANT I MEAN LOOK AT YOU, YOU DAMN COW MY ARMS BARELY REAC-
HAHA! OW!
SMACK
GET INS DE BEFORE I RELEASE MY SPIKED LOG ASSHOLE.



happen. It's one of those comics that will make people go, 'Oh my God, did they really go there?'"

CH: Is there a central character we follow through this?

Jock: "It opens with a little girl who's in the forest with her friends and catches a glimpse of something. But then the family moves to another town and the girl disappears. The parents are distraught and everyone is out searching for her, but when the police come and speak to the father everything changes and he realises that nothing is as it seems."

CH: It sounds very much like a dark Brothers Grimm-style retelling. Is it set in a fantasy world?

Jock: "We were talking about setting it in the '20s, but no, the first arc will be set in the present day. What's really interesting about that, though, is that we can flashback to 500 years ago or transplant it to Greenland for an arc – there's opportunities to move around with different characters and protagonists. We'll have the ability, whether we go there or not, to build up a mythology and have a backstory that means we can move around and tell other stories. It's an ongoing story, but we're going to do an arc, then break for a few months, then another arc and another break. We're unsure whether those arcs are going to fully connect or whether they might just be their own stories."

CH: Are you looking to do this in a "normal" Jock style?

Jock: "In the past I've thought too much about how to approach a project and all that does is get in the way, so I'm not consciously changing my style. We've got a few ideas about the style and about some of the visual tricks that we're going to use. We talked about maybe having little inserts, almost like what Alan Moore had in *Watchmen*, which are back matter that we scatter around a bit. It's still early days so nothing's been set in stone, but it's a nice idea; maybe a photocopy of a handwritten note or a book from 1623 talking about tinctures and notes about someone finding out what the recipes mean – little things like that which build the world. Because it's an Image book we've got more leeway to play around with those elements."

Above: Horror takes many forms Scott Snyder and Jock's *Wytches*, left, and *Batman The Black Mirror*

CH: Is this going to be black-and-white or colour?

Jock: "It's going to be coloured by Matt Hollingsworth. Colour's key, because atmosphere and tone are really important in horror. You've got to get those moments to be as scary as they can be and colour adds so much control to that."

CH: You haven't done much horror...

Jock: "*Batman: The Black Mirror* is a horror story, it just happens to be set in Batman's world. Horror is clearly Scott's passion and he wants this to be his most horrific story yet. Image is a great place to be at the moment. A lot of amazing books are coming out from some amazing people, so it makes sense to do it there." CH

***Wytches* by Scott Snyder and Jock is due from Image in September.**

Theme park life

Jörg Tittel

Comic Heroes catches the Hollywood-baiting screenwriter-turned-comics-writer as he unleashes an armed and dangerous mouse on an unsuspecting public...

By Rob Power

BORN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
HIGH Becoming a comics writer...
NOW RICKY ROUSE
MORE www.oiffy.com

Go to Hollywood, they said. Become a successful screenwriter, they said. And that's exactly what Belgian-born writer Jörg Tittel set out to do. Before Hollywood stiffed him, of course, and left him wondering how the hell to get his stories out without being completely ripped off in the process.

Having his fingers burned in the US wasn't enough to stop the irrepressible Tittel, though. Teaming up with artist John Aggs, he created *Ricky Rouse Has A Gun*, a tale of survival, cultural subversion and giant cartoon mice wielding automatic weaponry. Needless to say, it's a lot of fun...

Comic Heroes: *Ricky Rouse Has A Gun* is based in a singularly strange setting: a Chinese theme park populated by rip-offs of popular western characters. Where did the idea come from?

Jörg Tittel: "I think the early beginnings of it must have been when I was in Los Angeles. I had just finished working for a videogames company, and I was a budding screenwriter. It turned out that a couple of projects that I had come up with – written and presented and pitched to people – had actually been ripped off by other people. It was quite interesting to see stuff that you'd fully written, conceived, pitched – even down to some of the concept artists I'd used – suddenly ending up in movies with big stars in them."

CH: That must have been an incredibly frustrating experience...

JT: "It happens all the time, sadly. But then the cool thing is that if you are a genuinely creative person then you have ideas coming out of every orifice! Ultimately, now I've taken on a very Jesus-like attitude towards it, I feel kind of sorry for them! Because if you can't come up with this kind of shit by yourself, then there's really something wrong with you and you shouldn't be in this business. So I don't

“We have yet to find a superhero who is relevant to the 21st century”

care. We have western culture dominating the world, or at least we did for a little while, and now we have big corporations desperately clinging on to old ideas. But individual creators seem to be left out of the game.

"*Ricky* consciously has references, some subtle, some less so, to existing films and franchises and other things. Batman is a very

old character, from a time when America played a very different role in the world, and these characters are very stuck in the 20th century. We have yet to find a superhero who is relevant to the 21st century. And I'm not saying Ricky is one, not at all, I just think that we are riding on a lot of old ideas. I hope our synergies with China and the whole world will create something new."

CH: Why did you set the book in China?

JT: "Obviously the rise of China has been a major theme in the world for the last couple of decades at least, and I personally have been very inspired by them. They are obviously a very rich culture, but in the west we only know them as the people that manufacture iPhones and make pirated copies of our movies. All that kind of stuff served as inspiration for *Ricky Rouse*, not to mention all the sequels and prequels that are coming out. In a way, I don't really see much of a difference between those and the Chinese rip-offs."

SUPERVISED THE DESIGN MYSELF?
AND I'VE BEEN TRYING HARD. VERY HARD.
I'D FIND THE PERFECT NAME FOR HIM.
UNTIL I MET YOU.
RICHARD. MEET RICKY.
RICKY ROUSE
YOU MEAN, RICKY-MOUSE?
NO, MR. ROUSE.
RICKY ROUSE
THAT'S UH, I'M VERY FLATTERED BUT PEOPLE WILL NAH. I MEAN,
WHAT'S A ROUSE?
JACK YOU.
WHAT IS A PARKER?
IT'S HIS FAMILY NAME. LIKE JOHN SMITH. OR PETER PARKER.
ALSO, THIS WAY WE DON'T CONFUSE PEOPLE
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, HE'S STILL A BIT OF A...
RIP OFF, DON'T YOU THINK?
RIP OFF?

CH: Your background is as a screenwriter – when did you decide to turn Ricky into a comic?

JT: "I did write it as a screenplay first, not because I wanted to make it as a movie but because that's all I knew how to write. It wasn't until I met John Aggs and started studying his work and his processes that I started going, 'Okay, I'm going to write a script in a form that we'll be able to communicate best.'"

CH: How did you find the process of writing a comic?

JT: "It's completely different from writing screenplays! It's funny because in a screenplay, you sort of want to capture the action as it's happening. In a comic book, you almost show the action as if it just happened, and here's the impact of it. You go to the end of the punch. In film, it's the beginning of the punch, the lead up, that's interesting, but in a comic book, the best way to capture the motion is through the impact. So that changes a lot of things.

"The other thing is that for me, it was much more of a design job than a writing job in a sense. Because I could really plan every page based on cliffhangers and page turners. The layout of the pages suddenly became the biggest challenge, but it's a really fun thing to do. And that's great. You can really throw everything at the page that you want. The fact that John managed to cram an entire theme park in those panels impressed me incredibly. You're putting as much thinking into it as you would a movie – in certain respects, even more so. Everything is a still, so everything has to make sense, whereas in a movie you can make a quick cut and nobody will know the difference.

CH: The hardback itself is a beautiful thing – was that high-end presentation part of the reason you wanted to work with SelfMadeHero?

JT: "SelfMadeHero is incredible. Emma Hayley, who founded the company, has impeccable taste. She commissioned this in a moment of madness, clearly! I pushed for the gold cover – I didn't have to push much! I told Emma, 'You know what would be really cool? If we released this limited edition gold hardcover a couple of months before the paperback.' And she just goes, 'Okay.' I think it's beautiful. If nothing else it's a lovely doorstop!"

CH: You also did some interesting promotional work for the book...

JT: "I shot a live-action music video with a full-size Ricky Rouse. It has an original song by James Lavelle, who is the guy behind UNKLE. It's pretty silly! And also, because it's all about copyright infringement, which is connected to piracy, I decided to team up with BitTorrent, who do this thing online called BitTorrent Bundles. They've collaborated with artists like Madonna and Moby to launch albums, or release a few tracks for free. We've been giving away the first 33 pages of the book for free. The music video has had 240,000 downloads on BitTorrent which is pretty cool. I don't know if this will lead to sales, but it's still fun!"

***Ricky Rouse Has A Gun* is out in hardback now.**

Above: Terrorists invade a theme park. This is a job for Ricky Rouse

UNCIVIL WARRIORS

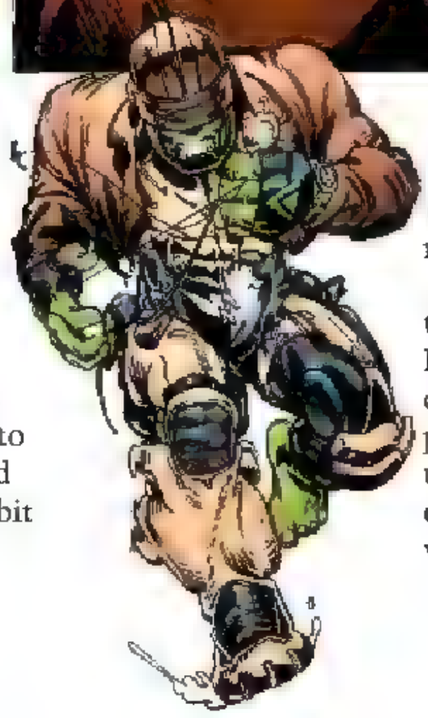
Carl Potts, Chuck Dixon and Larry Stroman talk to **Stephen Jewell** about resurrecting their legion of space heroes

All images © Titan Comics

You wouldn't blame Carl Potts for wondering "if only". Back in 2010 when the likes of Star Lord, Gamora and Groot were still minor league comic book oddities, film producer Jerry Bruckheimer commissioned a screenplay for a Disney film of the former Epic Comics editor-in-chief's series *Alien Legion*. But after buying both Marvel and Lucasfilm, Disney execs opted to concentrate on *Guardians Of The Galaxy* and *Star Wars* instead. Not that Potts has rested on his laurels, taking advantage of the current popularity of superheroic space opera to find Force Nomad a new home at Titan Comics.

"If Guardians does well, it may raise enthusiasm for other, new intergalactic action franchises," he says, revealing that he had a hand in the Guardians' path to success after hiring Bill Mantlo and Mike Mignola to helm 1985's inaugural *Rocket Raccoon* limited series. "Hopefully the new series will fire up fans of the old series and attract the attention of hordes of new fans as it's designed to appeal to readers who are aware of the title as well as those who have never heard of *Alien Legion* before."

A versatile all-rounder, Potts first came up with the idea for *Alien Legion* when he was an aspiring creator in the early 1980s. "When I was a fan trying to break into comics, I wrote and drew a couple of original short stories as samples to show editors and to try and get work," he recalls. "One focused on an all-human foreign

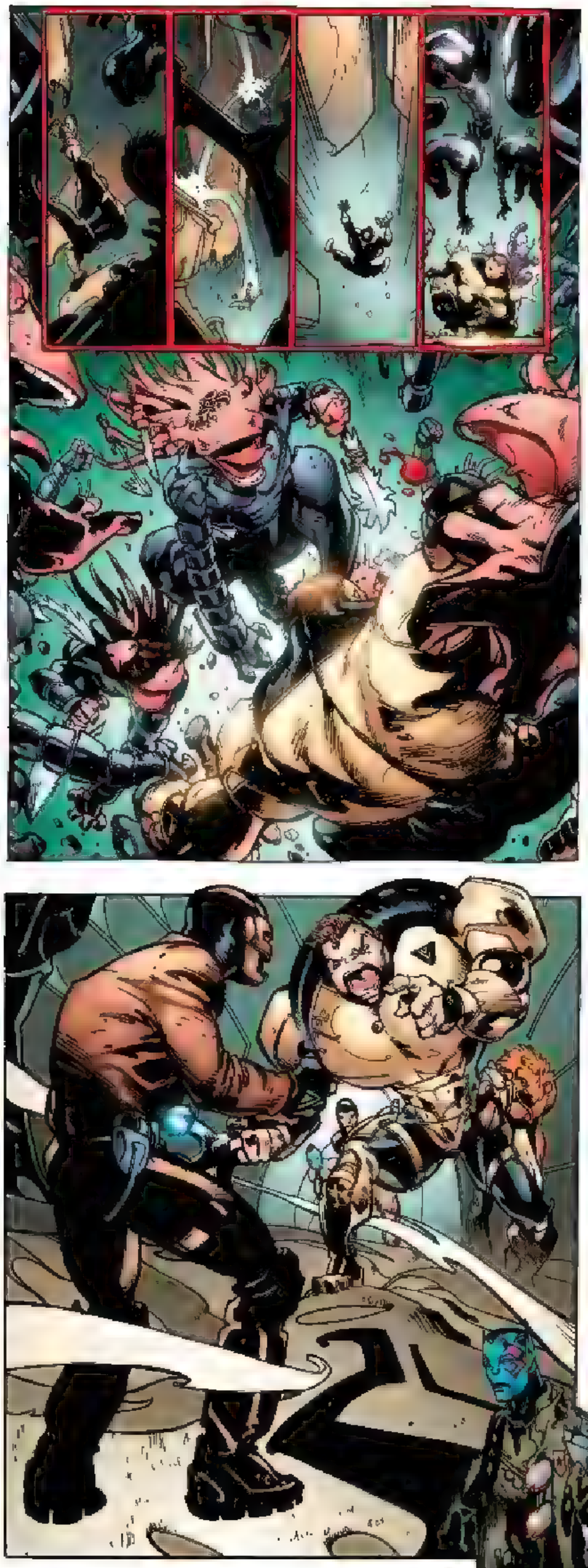


legion-like force in space. The other had an alien character with a serpentine lower body. When I looked at the pages for both stories together, it occurred to me that the legion force should be composed of a wide variety of alien races and the serpentine character, Sarigar, became the leader."

After joining Marvel in 1983, Potts sold *Alien Legion* to then-Epic boss Archie Goodwin. It launched in April 1984 but the pressures of his day job meant that Potts couldn't handle the entire book all by himself, so he initially teamed up with scripter Alan Zelenetz and penciller Frank Cirocco, who was then replaced by Chris Warner for #7-11. After contributing a couple of back-ups, Larry Stroman came onboard permanently with #12. With the first series concluding with #20, Potts admits that Chuck Dixon "was a natural target to recruit into the Legion" for 1987's second volume, which adopted "a grittier and a bit more hard-hitting direction."

"*Alien Legion* was the first and is still my favourite series that I've ever worked on," recalls Stroman. "It's also the longest run that I've had on a book."

With Epic closing its doors in 1994, the Legion disappeared from view until Dark Horse released a couple of reprint omnibuses in 2009. But after they finally passed on any new material, Titan picked up the baton last year. "The plan is to consolidate the new *Alien Legion* material with collections of older content at the »

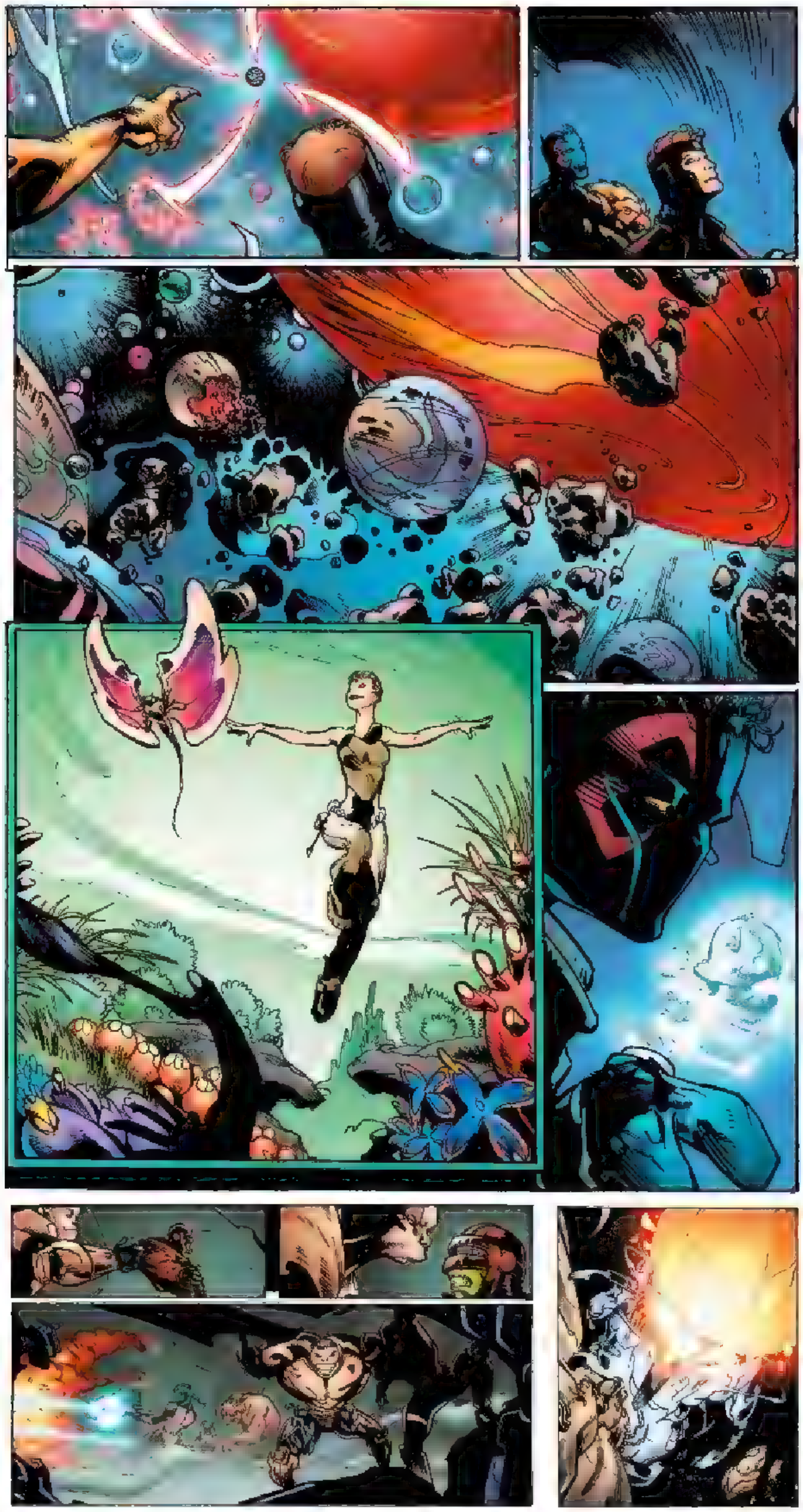


same publisher," says Potts, who is happy to welcome both Dixon and Stroman back into the fold for the four-part *Uncivil War*. "Chuck and Larry were very much my first choices as they've contributed so much great work to *Alien Legion* in the past."

Credited with providing "soul" as well as inks for Stroman's pencils, Potts's role continues to be somewhat nebulous. "There were a handful of concepts and events that I wanted incorporated into the new storyline but I didn't have a real story arc in mind," he explains. "Chuck took the tidbits I offered, added a heck of a lot more and generated a great story. And I oversee and approve all their work, which is a very easy job with Chuck and Larry."

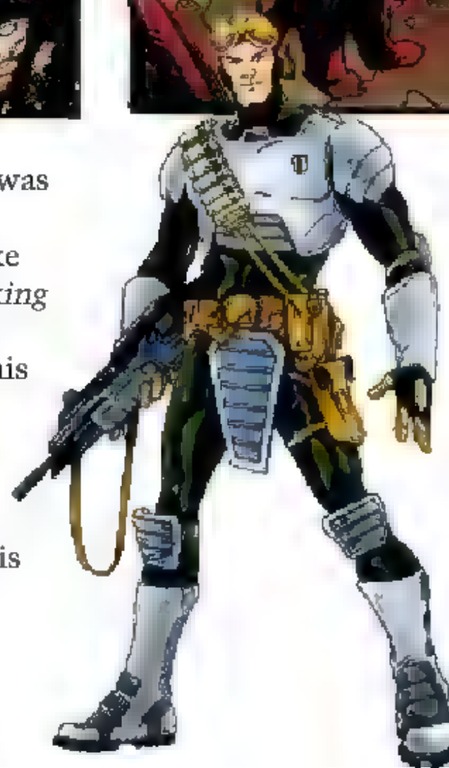
Closer in tone to Walt Simonson's also-revived *Star Slammers* than the more fantastical *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, *Alien Legion*'s core premise needed little updating, reckons Dixon. "Its underlying cynicism is probably even more relevant today than when it was first published," he says. "We live in a world of brushfire wars and automated combat in a planetary clash of cultures. The Nomads would fit in well."

"In some ways, the title was ahead of its time when it first came out," adds Potts. "When I grew up in the '70s, all of the comics and TV series that had ongoing combat missions, like *Star Trek* and *Sgt Rock*, featured continuing lead characters who never got killed or maimed. When the crew of the starship Enterprise beamed down to a planet, you knew that Kirk,



Spock, McCoy and Scotty, etc were in no real danger. Only the previously unseen crew members would be killed as they were obvious cannon fodder while all of the regular characters only received flesh wounds and were soon back in action. *Alien Legion* is about a combat unit and in a real combat unit people are sometimes killed or maimed. I wanted to reflect that danger in the series, so occasionally a fairly major character would die or be seriously injured. No one who died came back to life in *Alien Legion* and, at the time, that was fairly revolutionary."

Potts suggests that hit TV shows like *Lost*, *Game Of Thrones* and *The Walking Dead* have taken a leaf out of *Alien Legion*'s book. "The trick to pulling this off without alienating the audience is to replace the dead characters with new ones who are at least as interesting and compelling as the dead ones were," he continues. "This is something that Chuck and Larry have excelled at during their time on Alien Legion. The turnover and addition of new characters is one of the things about the book that has helped keep it fresh. In *Uncivil War*, we introduce several new characters as they integrate with the vets of Force Nomad. We will also show that there is more history, diversity and complexity to (alien adversaries) the Harkilons than was previously known."



***Alien Legion** is out now.*

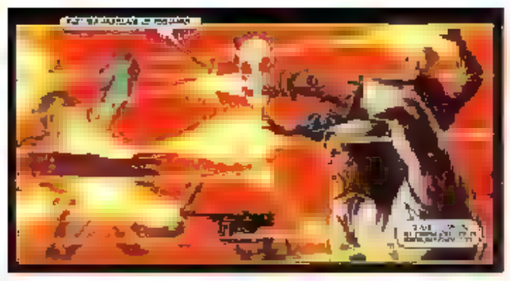
THE STARS FROM THE STARS

TOP 25 COSMIC COMIC HEROES

The out-of-this-world **Matt Bielby** champions the heroes who make the cosmos their home

Are superheroes science fiction? Well, of course they are – they're people that can do impossible things, and usually through the agency of spurious scientific advancement or accident rather than magic (though characters powered by the supernatural exist too, of course). For most of them, adventure takes place against a backdrop we can just about pretend is "the world outside our window".

But we're not interested in those guys here. Instead, let us look to the stars: to the heroes who come to us from outer space and return there often, and to the men and women who adventure there from Earth...

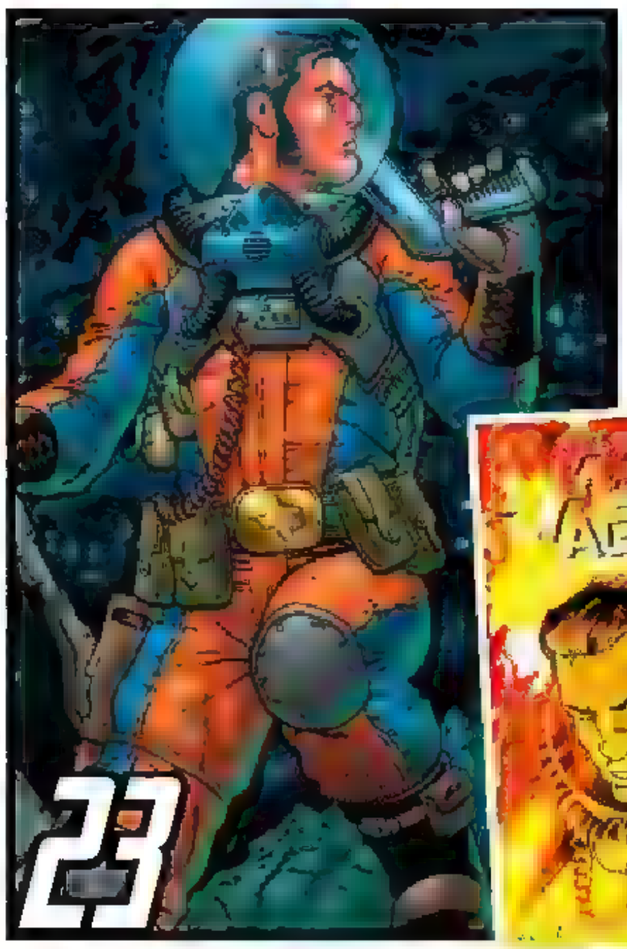


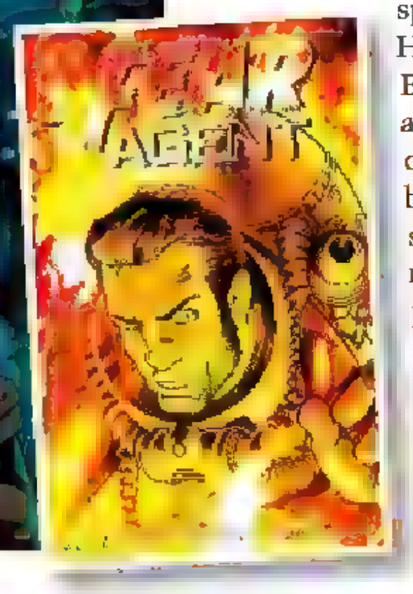
DREADSTAR

Jim Starlin's big post-Marvel, creator-owned Epic Comics magnum opus tells of a vast, endless far-future war between Church and State and the adventures of a small rebel band caught between them. Starlin stayed for 40 issues plus assorted build-up stories, but – though a well crafted, silly-yet-sophisticated, often poignant mix of *Star Wars* and *The Three Musketeers* – it never quite reaches the visual heights of his Marvel work.

24 PROPHET

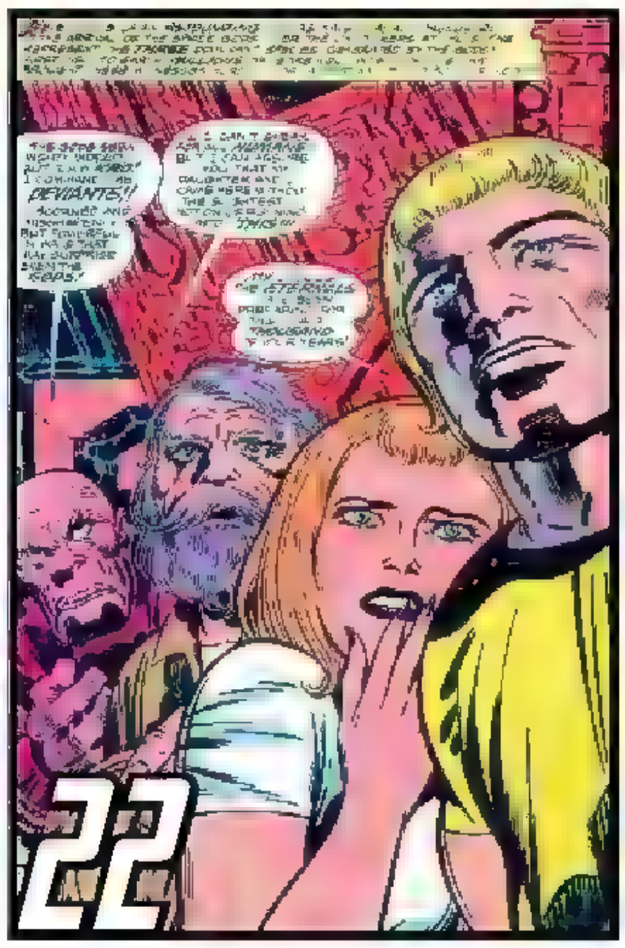
Rob Liefeld's original 1992 version of John Prophet may have looked to most like an irredeemably terrible creation, but meet the series that proves us all wrong. The 2012 revival sees our hero wake from cryosleep on a transformed future Earth, there to explore endless mystery and a Moebius-esque world of alien creatures, concepts and locations depicted by a rotating cast of artists. Truly one of the most pleasant surprises in comics.





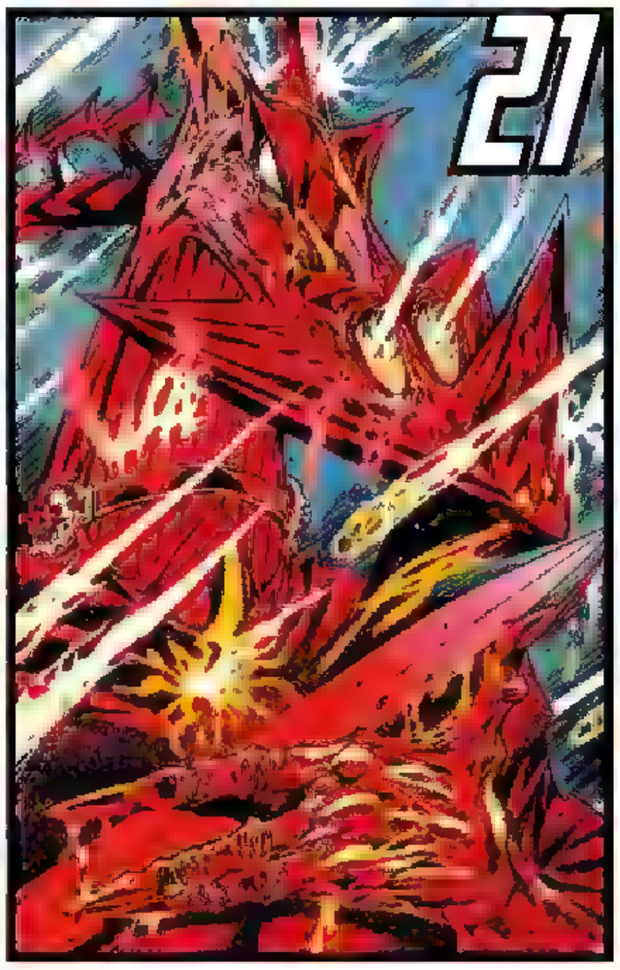
HEATH HUSTON

Rick Remender's energetic Image/Dark Horse space adventure *Fear Agent*, in which borderline alcoholic redneck spaceman Heath Huston protects Earth from alien attack, has been one of the best-received pulp sci-fi tales of recent years; packed with ideas and highly likeable, it's a 21st century love letter to the old cliffhanger-heavy movie serials



IKARIS

Jack Kirby's mid-'70s return to Marvel is often forgotten by fans, but there's strong stuff here, not least in *The Eternals*, a more conventional reworking of "Fourth World" tropes and themes. What made this particular hidden civilisation of modern-day godlings so intriguing was the way it channelled the was-God-a-spaceman? conspiracy theories so popular at the time, thanks to Erich von Däniken's *Chariots Of The Gods*. Okay, so hunky blonde Ikaris is a tad dull compared to Orion or Thor, but he's been around long enough to be mistaken for Noah's dove, is powered by cosmic energy, communicates with Celestials, and takes his Earth-protecting mission very seriously indeed.



NEMESIS THE WARLOCK

One of *2000 AD*'s most bizarre strips, Pat Mills and Kevin O'Neill's *Nemesis* tells a far-future tale of brave rebels in covert revolt against a totalitarian empire – the twist being that people are the bad guys, the ugly aliens our heroes. Chief amongst them is Nemesis, a space-satyr who makes for a beautifully bizarre and unknowable lead. Though occasional storylines explore the Warlock's homeworld, what makes Nemesis so extraordinary is his inherent mystery. We can see that the human empire, taking joint inspiration from the Spanish Inquisition and the KKK, is evil from the off; Nemesis, however, we're never quite sure about...

VALERIAN ET LAURELINE

Romping through space and time in tales that combine light comedy with a darker edge, the boyish Valérian and his red-haired sidekick Laureline operate in a far-future universe where people have spread through the galaxy. Earth is a peaceful place, with most of the population happy to live in a *Matrix*-like dream state while kindly "Technocrats Of The First Circle" see to all their needs. This is a series of fast-moving, inventive, often funny and – as the years went on – increasingly complex space operas; it's been credited with influencing *Star Wars*, while Laureline's fan club has long threatened to outstrip Valérian's own. »

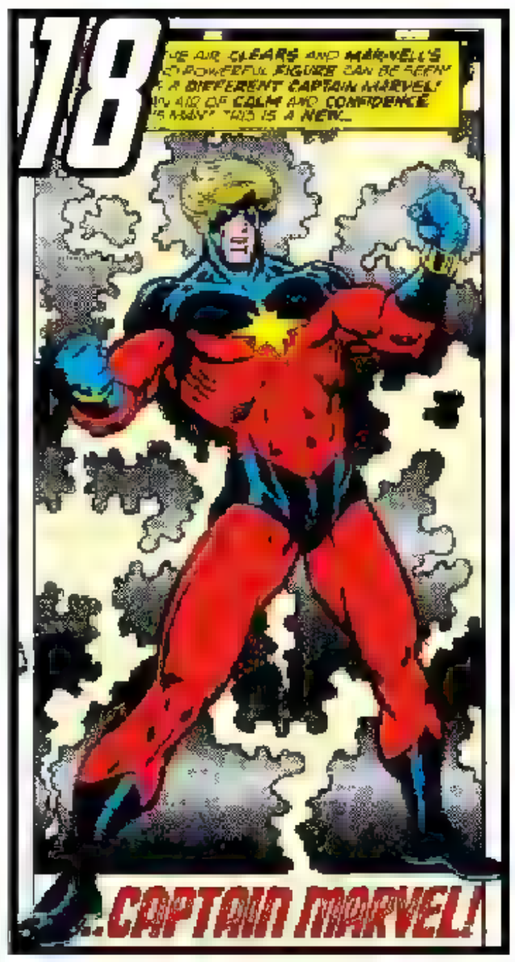
All images © Marvel, DC and respective copyright holders

19

SUPERMAN

Just about any list we ever do will contain this guy: he's the first superhero, the most powerful and probably the most famous. He's not higher up this list for two reasons: the spotty nature of the comics themselves, and the fact that space adventure is only one of the many things he does. The greatest Superman period of them all ran through the late 1950s and early '60s, and it's this we have to thank for so much of the mythology – the Bottled Cities and the Negative Zone, the flying dog and the memories of Krypton.

Superman came from space, but he was just as much Clark Kent, bookish Midwestern farm boy, as he was Kal-El, and in him the domestic and the most fantastical space adventures sit side by side



CAPTAIN MARVEL

The Kree are among the big noises of Cosmic Marvel, but we've only really got to know one of them well: Captain Mar-Vell, introduced in the try-out book *Marvel Super-Heroes* and, briefly, one of the most exciting protagonists in comics.

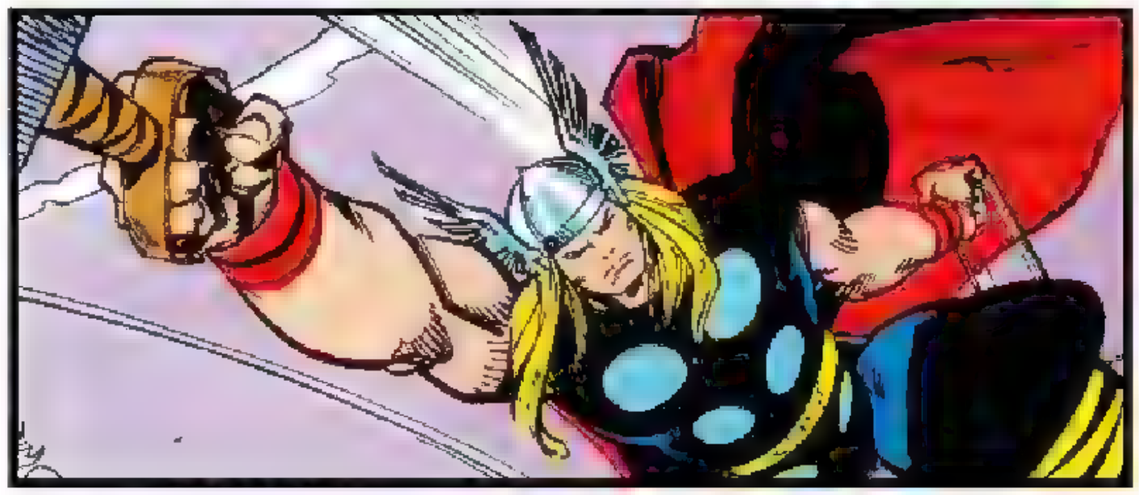
Mar-Vell was first officer of a Kree ship sent to spy on Earth, but he was soon disobeying orders in order to protect us, using his Kree tech to pose as a superhero down here, and earning cosmic powers from assorted strange, space-dwelling entities. This new incarnation was saved from imminent cancellation by Jim Starlin and, temporarily, it was the most inventive, twisting and shock-packed book Marvel had.

Starlin's ongoing "Thanos War" storyline was an early Marvel space epic – much imitated, never beaten – packed with dynamic storytelling, shock moments and innovative page layouts.

ADAM STRANGE

The first human on a distant planet, Adam Strange started out as your average archeologist from modern day America, stolen across space by "zeta-beam" teleport tech to the dying planet Rann. Armed with jet packs and ray guns, Strange would become Rann's champion, but every so often the beam would ping him back to Earth, sometimes at the most inopportune moments.

One of the joys of this strip is the way it mixed space monsters with real-world solutions to stopping them. Meanwhile, Carmine Infantino's joyous art made it one of the most handsome books on the shelf.



16 THOR

Marvel's Thor was always as much sci-fi hero as he was Norse God, most notably during an incredible run in the mid-'60s that took us into space to meet the Colonizers and Ego, the Living Planet; introduced Mangog and the High Evolutionary with his Knights of Wundagore; saw Thor lose Jane Foster but find a more fitting mate in warrior goddess Sif; then battle one of his most visually impressive enemies, Ulik the Troll.

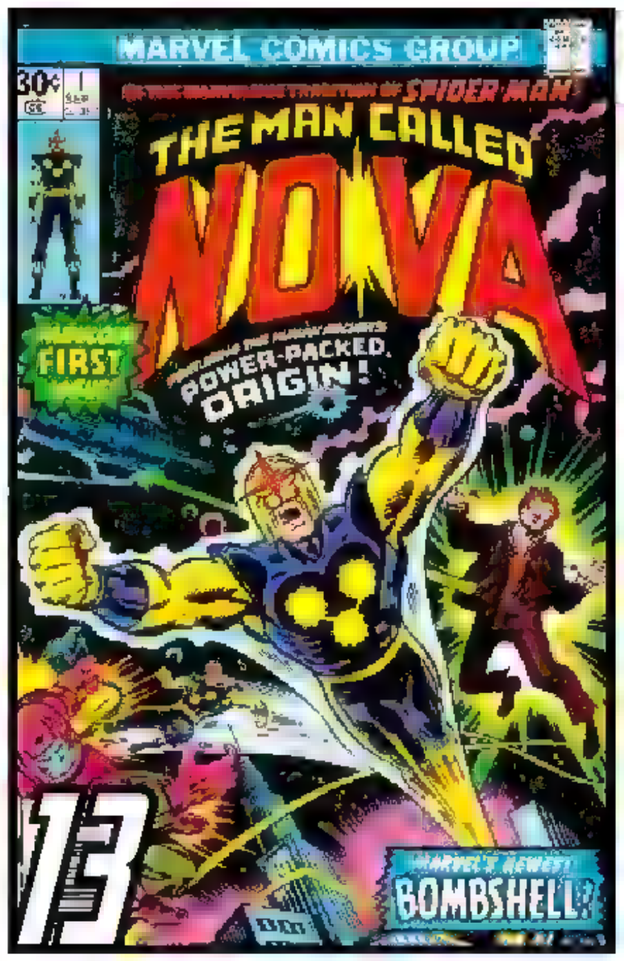
Without Kirby's success on *Thor* at building these rolling stories, he might never have applied the same to the *Fantastic Four* – and without the inventions that brought us, this list (and the joy of comics) would be thin gruel indeed.

ADAM WARLOCK

First created as Him in old *Thor* and *FF* issues, but soon renamed Adam Warlock and whisked off to Counter-Earth, this grimacing, artificial demigod mutated into a clear Christ analogy. He had an Earth replica to save, the devil in the form of High Evolutionary creation the Man-Beast to defeat, a gang of teen disciples – and even a crucifixion to be resurrected from. Then Jim Starlin came across to up the entire strip's game: now the main enemy was The Magus, Warlock's evil future self, and Starlin's art was never so dynamic, startling or, well, "cosmic".

ORION

Jack Kirby's "Fourth World" books heaved with invention and potent new characters, and for once the key hero wasn't overpowered by everything around him: Orion fought for New Genesis and for Earth, but he was secretly Darkseid's son – and potentially just as dangerous – now living amongst the good guys following an ancient fairytale-esque baby swap. Trying to do good, seething with rage, and zipping through space on a flying stool, Orion is one of the most striking and intriguing of all space heroes; that his series (and Kirby's time at DC) ended prematurely, and few people have known what to do with him since, is one of the minor tragedies of comics.



NOVA

Nova's first series, introducing a young, very ordinary "human rocket" with Green Lantern-like space-police powers, was a minor hit, and he's been back numerous times since – a minor-to-mid-range player, at least until the original Earth-based Nova, Richard Ryder, appeared to sacrifice himself in one of Marvel's giant cosmic storylines, to be replaced by 15-year-old Sam Alexander, whose booze-hound dad had always told bedtime tales of his time as a member of the Nova Corps himself.

Over the years numerous other Novas have appeared – though they swim in and out of focus – and the Corps have recently become much bigger players in the Marvel U.

HAWKMAN

Every Hawkman is a flying hero – a muscular man with artificial wings and an intimidating raptor-esque helmet – but the original version was strictly Earth-bound. It was with his 1961 revival, in the wake of The Flash and Green Lantern's successful returns, that the idea of Hawkman as an alien took hold; this version wasn't called "Carter Hall" but "Katar Hol", and he was a fairly brutal cop from the planet Thanagar, who came to Earth with his wife Shayera (Hawkgirl) to catch a runaway, then stayed to fight crime.

Numerous reboots have muddied the waters between the two versions considerably, but it's the aggressive can-do attitude and impressive visuals that have always been key to Hawkman's appeal, as well as the romance between the two leads.

Alex Raymond's lush adventure series, following the exploits of hunky sports star Flash Gordon on the planet Mongo, is packed with spectacular landscapes and non-stop cliffhangers. The "human hero becomes champion and saviour of an alien world" trope has rarely been executed with such verve and class.

JE SUPPOSE QUE ÇA PROVIENT D'UN QUELCONQUE
JAMAIS VU!...
ET COMME J'ETAIS SEULE À BORD DE LA NEF, JE NE VOIS PAS QUI AURAIT PU Y INTRODUIRE CETTE CHOSE BIZARRE...
10

BARBARELLA

Mid-century French illustrator Jean-Claude Forest is now best remembered for his 1962 sci-fi creation, Barbarella. She's a liberated woman – confident, independent and sexually generous – who wanders the stars, occasionally doing good.

Though Babs first appeared in *V-Magazine*, it was when the original serial was collected two years later that it became an international hit. Further Barbarella stories would follow over the next couple of decades, but it was the hit 1968 movie version – the film that made a star of Jane Fonda – that cemented Barbarella in the public consciousness. Today, even people who've never read the comics – or even seen the movie – know exactly who Barbarella is, and what she stands for.

NEXUS

Though it looks like a superhero strip – indeed, our hero, Horatio Valdemar Hellpop, dresses in one of the most dramatic superhero suits of them all – *Nexus* is actually pure sci-fi.

Set in the deep space of the far future, we follow Horatio as he earns superpowers from a powerful, manipulative alien called the Merk; his new job is to kill a certain number of human mass murderers per "cycle" for reasons unknown. Horatio ain't keen, but the Merk compels him through powerful dreams. Meanwhile, an endless stream of refugees rock up to Nexus's lonely home on the moon Ylum, creating a vast supporting cast of complex individuals, each with their own agenda. And slowly the mystery of what's really going on is revealed...

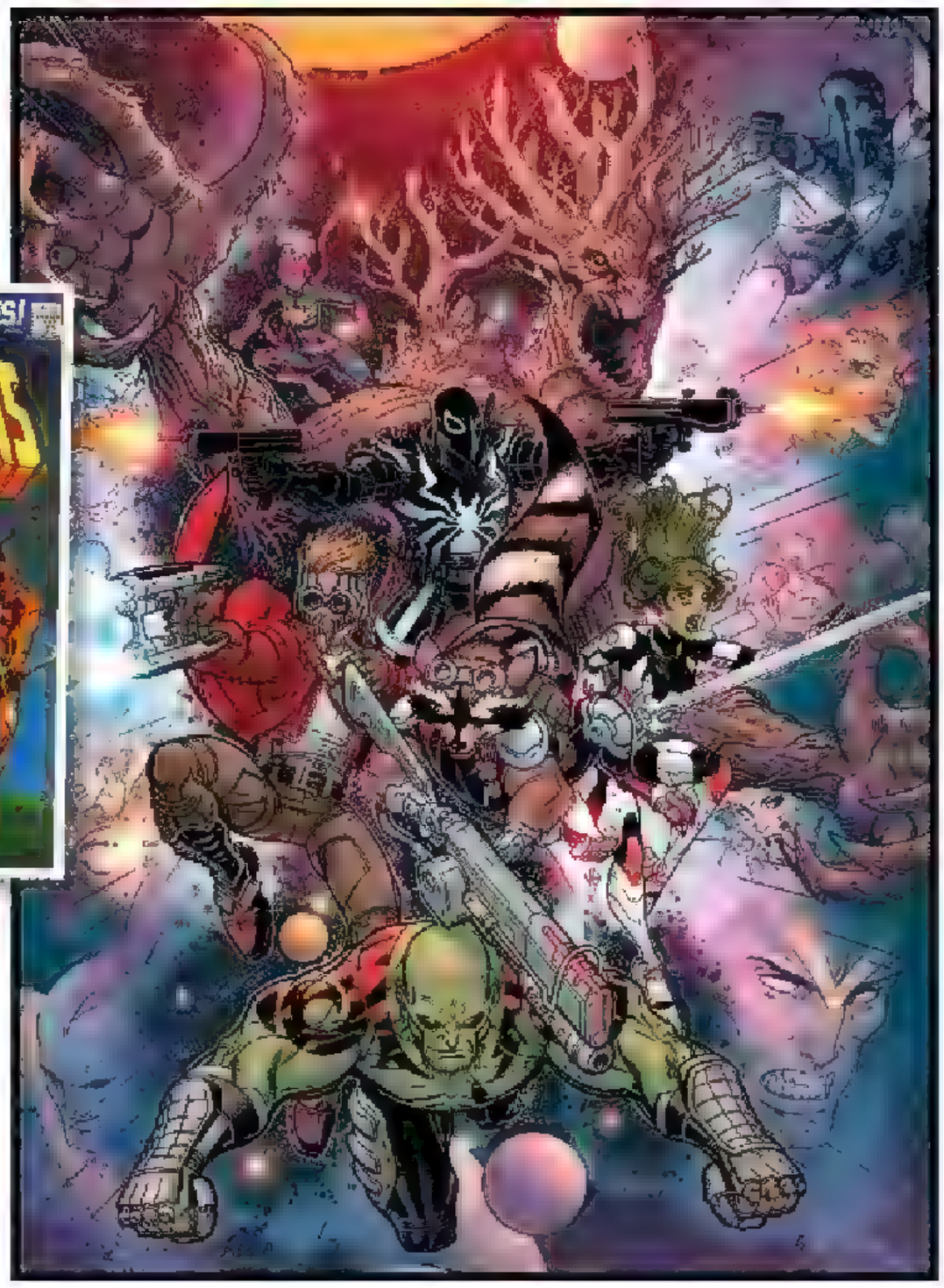
LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES

The best superheroes are great fun, of course, but in many fans the hackles rise when they think something's childish or goofy or, you know, likely to get them laughed at. With the Legion, pretending it makes sense or isn't often laughable is not really a viable option; to best enjoy their sunny early '60s future, where super-cool, superpowered kids can do pretty much whatever they want, and adults are damn near invisible, you just have to give yourself over to it. Reading *Legion* you'll never be one of the cool kids – but you might just have more fun. »

07 ALANA & MARKO (SAGA)

Brian K Vaughan's *Y: The Last Man* was one of the most successful high-concept SF epics in comics, but it never took us into space. Once it was finished, Vaughan largely dropped out of comics for a spell, but his return was spectacular – in *Saga* he and artist Fiona Staples have created one of the most compelling space operas in years, a fairytale-esque mash-up of spaceships, alien worlds, gender politics and high adventure, in which a mismatched mixed-species couple go on the run with their baby daughter while, behind them, an intergalactic war between magical and scientific factions rages.

Our heroes are Alana and Marko – parents and rebels – and a little bit of justice would see their story become, yes, this generation's *Star Wars*.



06 GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

There have effectively been two teams with this name in the Marvel Universe; the first – created in 1969 and appearing sporadically in brief series and assorted guest-star slots though the '70s and into the '90s, when they enjoyed their own self-titled comic for more than 60 issues – were 31st century freedom fighters against the Badoon invasion of the solar system. (They would regularly travel back in time to meet contemporary Marvel heroes, though sometimes the time travel would go the other way.)

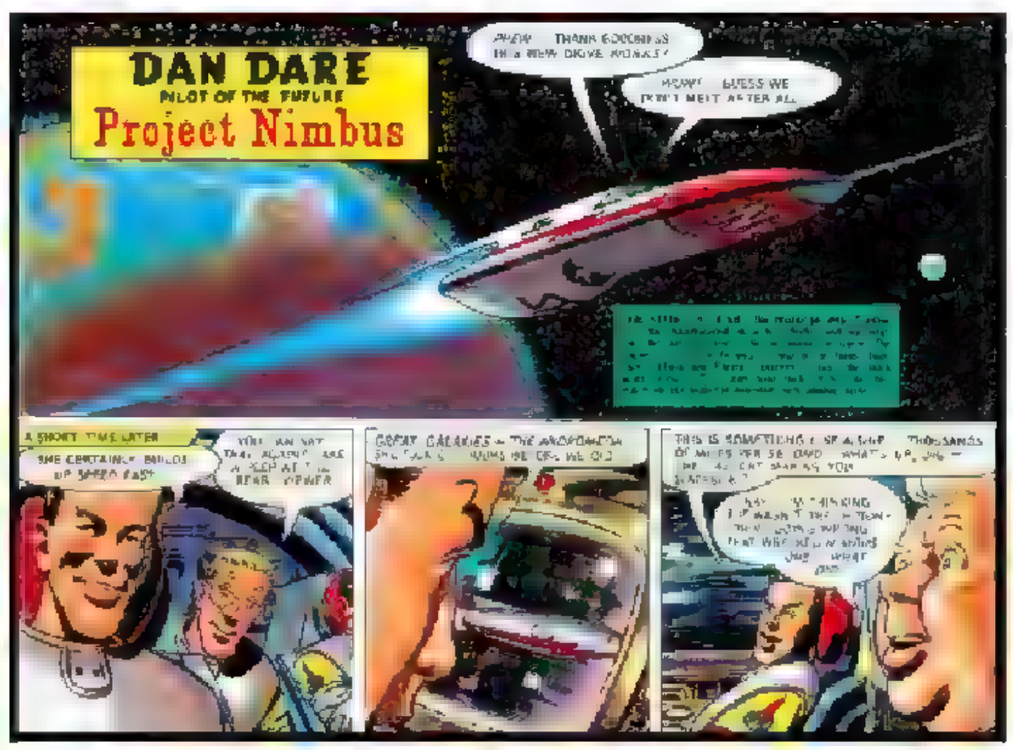
Meanwhile, the current team – connected mostly by name only – have been around since 2008, and star in the upcoming film. Another mixed bag of humans and aliens, but more rogues than rebels this time, they operate in the "present day" and have been fast-tracked to multimedia stardom with more alacrity than any other comic book property.

STRONTIUM DOG

Arguably *2000 AD*'s second biggest star – after Judge Dredd – is Johnny Alpha, mutant bounty hunter of the late 22nd century. He's a Clint Eastward-style strong, silent type roaming a series of remote frontier worlds.

Earth is little-seen – at least in the early tales – but we learn that nuclear war has devastated much of the planet, and many children were born with bizarre, often hilariously ugly mutations. Alpha is an honest man with a dark, brooding soul, but actually quite lucky by the standards of his peers – his mutations are hard to spot and unusually beneficial, and he's landed one of the few jobs available to his kind: working as an off-world operative of the Search/Destroy agency, an outfit manned by mutants willing to chase down the many of their kind who've turned to crime

Many Strontium Dog adventures are like hallucinogen-fuelled Spaghetti Westerns, but later tales up the satire and become more political, especially those that return Johnny to the cruelty of life on Earth.



DAN DARE

Perhaps the most famous British comic book character of them all – at least amongst those who don't read comics – is Dan Dare, Pilot Of The Future, who starred in the famous early '50s *Eagle* comic, a multi-genre anthology with a liberal Christian bent.

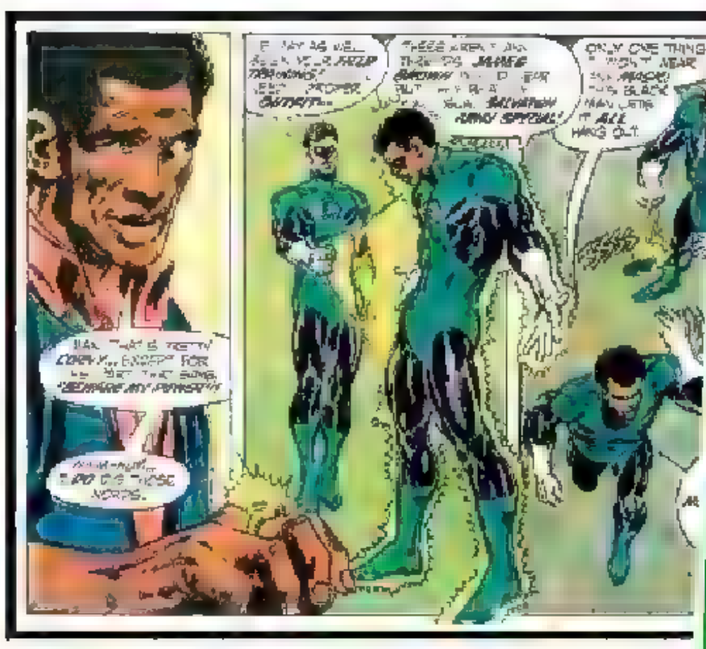
Telling of a seemingly idyllic near future, where an RAF-influenced Space Fleet keeps Earth safe from interstellar menace (notably that of the Treens from Venus), Dan Dare had two key strengths: scientific plausibility (Arthur C Clarke was an advisor) and exquisitely detailed artwork. From the perspective of 2014, our three key heroes – square-jawed but inclusive Dan; gritty working class comic relief Digby; and beautiful brainiac Professor Peabody – look like nothing so much as the teen wizard heroes of one of the planet's biggest fantasy franchises, and in their time they were almost as popular too. »

SO ANYWAY, THAT'S WHY WE NEED MEN ON MOARS. (AND BELIEVE ME, HAVING SEEN THE MEN IN QUESTION, THAT'S THE ONLY REASON.)
MUM, I BUNCHA WIMMEN
NUH SAY ANY O' YOUZE WIMMEN BRING ANY HEAT WEAPONS IN YA
MUM, SEE DIS FACE? ALL DOSE SCARS? ALL'D BEEN IN TWO HUNDRED BATTY FIGHTS, BABY.
YEAH. WELL DON'T GET DIS COURAGED. NOBODY LOSES ALL DE TIME.
MY MALE SOLDIERS WERE SLAGS SPECIAL LABOUR. ALMOST ALL WERE EXECUTED.
U SEEN DE STORM AT MOARS? SLAGS BRINGIN' BUT DAT ONLY'S HALF O' WHAT WE HAD HERE ON WE CAN SAY "SAVE ROE IT."
HALO JONES

03 HALO JONES

Comics have never been short of women ready to peel on the skin-tight spandex and pose provocatively – and literary sci-fi, too, has often been criticised for a lack of realistic, compelling female characters. All of which sees Halo Jones – who begins as a bored, naïve mall rat but escapes into space, finally earning herself some freedom – as a real breath of fresh air.

What made Halo work is that she never pretended to be anything but a regular woman – it's just that she wanted more out of life than her friends did, and wasn't afraid to take risks to achieve it. *Halo Jones* ran for but three short series in 1980s *2000 AD*, but Alan Moore and Ian Gibson's baby still enchants all who come across her.


HA! THAT'S TRUTH FOR YOU, BUT THAT SONG, "REVENGE OF PLANET X"
AND THOSE HOOPS.
THESE AREN'T JUST THE SAME OLD BATMAN AND ROBIN COMIC SPECIAL!
ONLY ONE THING. I WON'T HEAR A WORD AGAINST BLACK MAN, LISTEN IT ALL HANGS OUT.

02 GREEN LANTERN

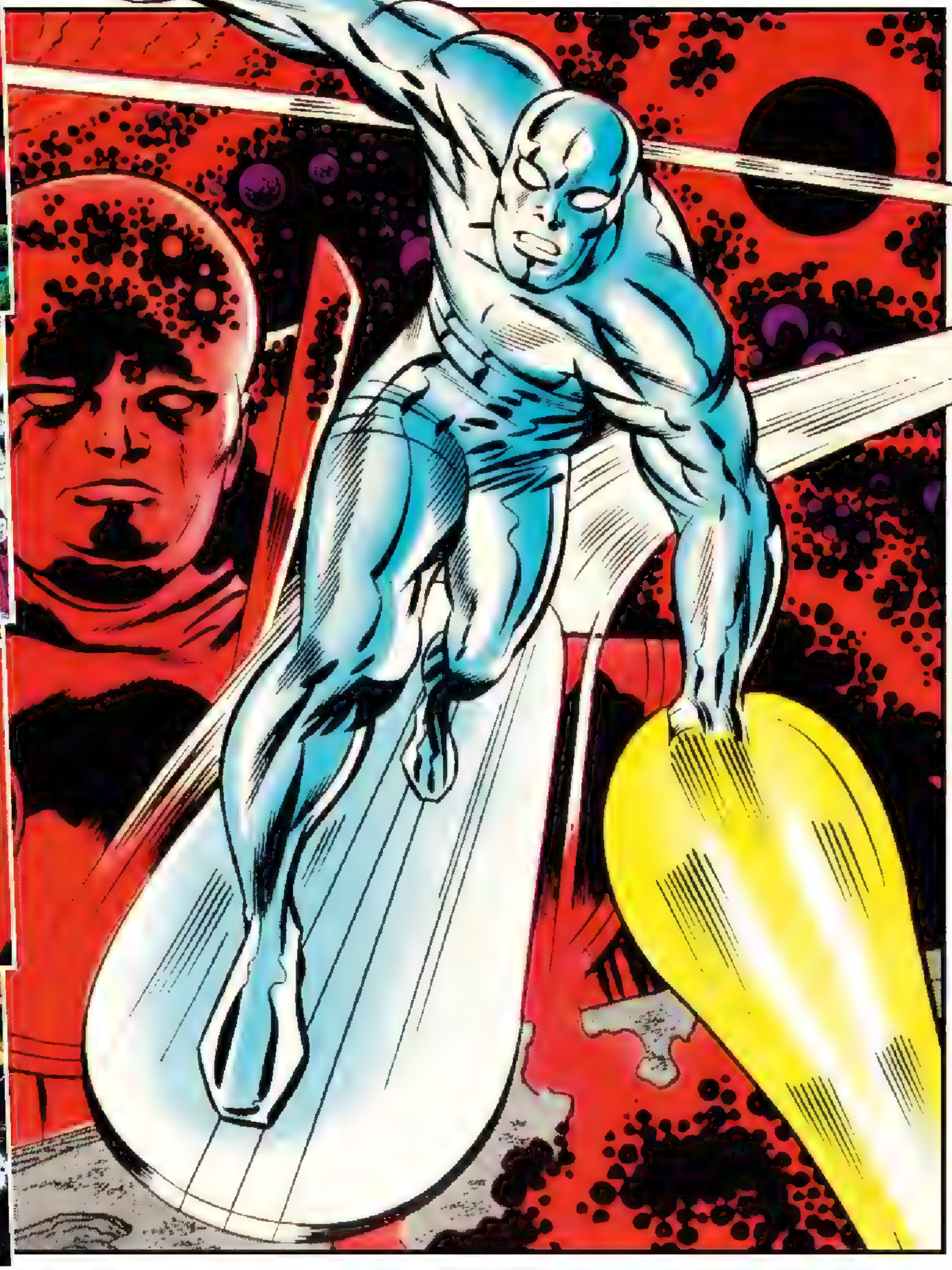
The revived *Green Lantern* launched in 1960, a striking follow-up to DC's then-recent revival of *The Flash*, and superheroes – so long in the doldrums – were back. This new space hero shared a name, and the idea of a "power ring", with his more magic-based Golden Age predecessor, but in all else was totally different – for his strip was pure early '60s SF.

Green Lantern tells of an intergalactic police force, sponsored by a race of blue dwarves and employing aliens of every type, each charged with protecting a sector of space and carrying a ring that turns thoughts into reality. We see the entire set-up through the eyes of Hal Jordan, a top-notch test pilot who becomes mankind's champion, and soon finds himself mingling with fish-aliens, plant-aliens and many more, his bizarre new colleagues in the fight to keep the universe safe.

Over the years, Hal has been replaced and returned, and the once well-meaning space army he belongs to dragged through the mud in numerous ways, but the strip endures – and Green Lantern remains the most consistently "science fiction" of all superheroes.

SENTINEL OF THE SPACEWAYS!
SILVER SURFER
BIG PREMIERE ISSUE
THE ORIGIN OF THE SILVER SURFER!
AN ALL-NEW BOOK-LENGTH MARVEL EPIC!

BUT NOW NO PALTRY WORDS OF OURS CAN DESCRIBE THE SHOCK, THE STUNNED INCREDULITY THAT FILLS THE SURFER'S SOUL, WHEN HE FINDS--
SHALLA BAL-- MY TRUE BELOVED!



01 SILVER SURFER

His origin is, rightly, legendary. As he worked up those early, celebrated *FF* issues that first featured Galactus – the planet-eating space god designed to be one of comics' most unforgettable villains – Jack Kirby added a streamlined silver angel as his herald, an emotion-free mystery man sky-riding on a stylised surfboard. It was a bizarre but undeniably amazing visual, and an initially-stunned Stan Lee soon adopted the Silver Surfer as his favourite new character, a troubled soul beyond anything Marvel had tried to date – and Marvel had been heavy on the tragedy for quite some time.

With some characters it's all about the visual, and there are few images more potent in pop culture than the sight of the brave one-time Norrin Radd soaring his lonely way through space on his silver board.

Of course, his legacy is just as tragic, in a way. Kirby had originally drawn the Surfer as a muscular, rather frightening figure, never intending his anti-hero to be some mere transformed man. When he and Lee fell out over it, though, the writing was on the wall for Jack at Marvel – and the company's first pure explosion of creativity went with him.

Spider-Man writer Dan Slott's top tips for writing Marvel-style action

PUTTING THE PULSE INTO POUNDING

Pioneered by Stan Lee during the '60s, the Marvel Method has been criticised for leaving all the work up to the artist. But as Dan Slott tells **Stephen Jewell**, it can also lead to greater creativity

I MAY HAVE PURGED ALL OF PARKER'S MEMORIES -
--BUT I CAN STILL RECALL THE ONES I'VE ALREADY ACCESSED!
THE EQUATION! IT COULD BE IN ONE OF THEM!
THINK! DAMN IT!
IS IT THERE? IN ONE OF THE FEW IMPRESSIONS I STILL POSSESS OR IS IT...
LOST?

All images © Marvel

SO WHAT IS THE MARVEL METHOD?

While many comic book authors prefer to supply full scripts, with all the necessary dialogue and panel descriptions, the so-called Marvel Method is still popular with many scribes. It was pioneered by Stan Lee during Marvel's '60s heyday so the former editor-in-chief could pen several books a month while still continuing with his day job. Instead of full scripts, the writer puts together a plot synopsis, of varying detail, which is sent to the artist. When the pages are complete, the writer adds all the words. It does allow for greater collaboration between creators, as the storytelling becomes the artist's responsibility, but Jack Kirby, Stan the Man's legendary artist, claimed that it just left most of the hard work up to him.

He was one of a quartet of writers charged with reinventing Peter Parker in 2008's controversial "Brand New Day" storyline, but Dan Slott has flown solo on the wall-crawler's bi-weekly adventures since *Amazing Spider-Man* #648.

Slott made his comic book debut with a back-up in July 1991's *New Warriors Annual* #1, before cutting his teeth on numerous animation-based younger reader titles including *Ren & Stimpy* for Marvel. After a move to DC, penning 2003 miniseries *Arkham Asylum: Living Hell*, he returned to Marvel, scripting series such as *She-Hulk* and *Mighty Avengers*.

Slott's controversial *Superior Spider-Man* run, saw a mind-swapped Doctor Octopus taking on the web-spinner's mantle but he recently resurrected Peter Parker in the pages of the relaunched *Amazing Spider-Man*.

WORK OUT WHAT SCRIPTING STYLE SUITS YOU

"I work in this kind of nebulous way, which is not really Marvel style but we call it that. I pretty much write what I want in every panel of every page with an indication of the dialogue and then I wait to see what gifts the artists give me when they draw these beautiful pages. And once I've seen the art, I might go, 'Okay, I'll add this line of dialogue here,' 'I'll put in this sound effect there,' 01 or 'We'll put in some narrative captions.'"

FULL SCRIPT VS THE MARVEL METHOD

"It's called the Marvel Method because it's the way Stan Lee did everything. But I tend to go for a little bit more detail. At one point a few years ago, Marvel was thinking of going Marvel style again as there was a couple of magic weeks where Joe Quesada was thinking, 'We should do this – we should go back to that.' I remember Ed Brubaker asking if he could see one of my plots, as I was supposedly the only guy working Marvel style at that point. He looked at my plot and basically said, 'You're too lazy to put in the script' and I said, 'Yeah, that's pretty much it.'" »

BUT IF THERE'S ONE REASON I SHOULD HAVE THE INDUCER-- IT'S BECAUSE IT'S BASED ON PYM PARTICLES/ MY DISCOVERY!
THAT MAY BE THE CASE, BUT WE BOTH KNOW...
I KNOW MORE ABOUT PYM PARTICLES THAN YOU!
BLSPPPT
OHHH SNAP!
DR. RICHARDS?
HANK?
IT'S ON, BITCH
02

Right: The return of the Lizard in a story by Slott and Giuseppe Camuncoli called "No Turning Back" in *Amazing Spider-Man* #688

INCLUDE DIALOGUE FROM THE START ONLY WHEN NECESSARY

"I only include dialogue in the first draft if there's a very specific exchange that I want in there, although I try not to do that too often. One exception that I can think of is from back when I was doing *Mighty Avengers*: there's a scene where Hank Pym and Reed Richards are going back and forth over different view screens, trying to get one-up on each other **02**. I wrote it out very specifically with all of the dialogue in place because I wanted this exact scene to happen in the end. There's a device that they're fighting over that Hank helped Goliath build. Reed is in possession of it but he doesn't want to give it back to Hank because he thinks Hank is rather loopy. They're arguing over the merits of who should have it and at one point Hank goes, 'I should have it because it's based on Pym Particles so I'm the most logical person to have this device.' But then Reed goes, 'Yes, but we all know that I know more about Pym Particles than you do.' Everybody in the room is doing spit-takes and the last line is Hank going, 'Reed, it's on, bitch!' That was all written out in full, but normally I wouldn't do that."

Below: Dan Slott and Giuseppe Camuncoli's *Superior Spider-Man* #29

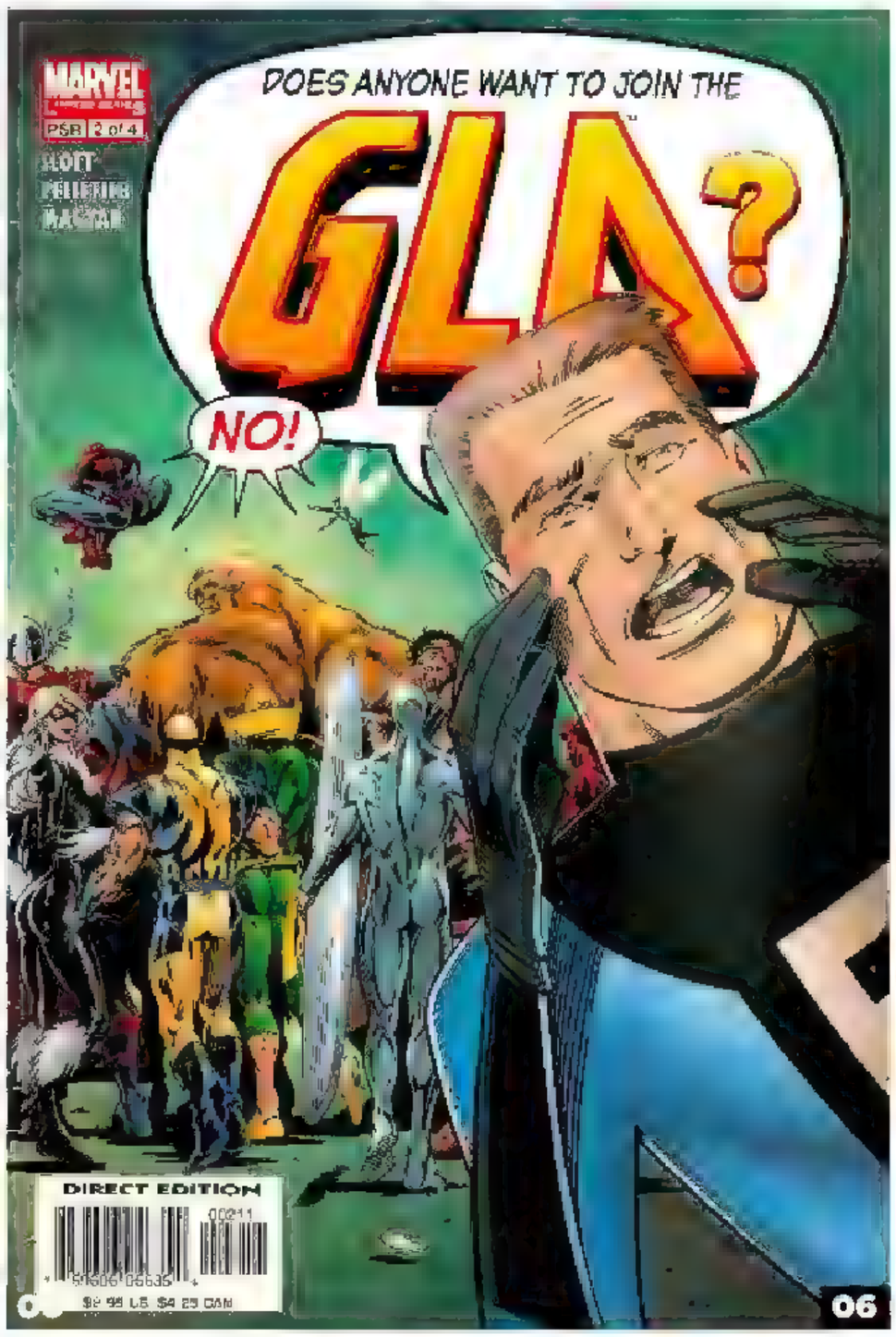
YOUR ARTIST WILL LEAVE YOU GEMS OF INSPIRATION

"Sometimes you get these little gifts that you didn't realise were there until you see the art. I had a bit in "New Ways To Die" (in *Amazing Spider-Man* #568-573) where Harry Osborn is confronted by his father in Norman's office. He spins around as he's in the chair and he's back in the Goblin suit but with the mask off. When John Romita Jr drew the scene, he had him drinking coffee and when I saw this mug, I thought, 'It has to say "World's Greatest Dad".' **03** That was just a gift as you don't see these things coming but how could you not have it say 'World's Greatest Dad'?"

LEAVE PLENTY OF SPACE FOR THE ACTION TO UNFOLD

"I'm terrible for not leaving the artist enough space for the action. But it also depends on who the artist is. I have given Giuseppe Camuncoli pages with barely any space and he's made them feel bigger **04**. Conversely, I remember giving one artist a double-page spread and they did a really tight close-up. I was like, 'I give you a double-page spread with this big action scene and you give me a close-up?!' The worst thing that any artist can do to me is show me that they can draw a crowd scene because then I'll ask for it all the time, which is a terrible thing for a writer to do. It's just mean! You're trapping your artist to a table for days. You should never do that!"

THIS'S CRAZY. I'M NOT GE TNG ANYTHING DONE...
...AND MEANWHILE MY LIFE S SL PP NG AWAY OUT THERE.
I PROMISED AUNT MAY I'D SAY GOODBYE BEFORE SHE LEFT.
WELL THERE S STILL TIME.
IF I DO THIS SP.DEY-STYLE.
SOUTH STREET SEAPORT TO LA GUARDIA?
I MAY SET A FEW WEB-SWING NO RECORDS BUT, YEAH I CAN PUL. TH S OFF
AND WHO KNOWS?
GETTING SOME FRESH AIR AND STEPPING OUT OF MY "BOX," MIGHT BE JUST WHAT THE--
SPIDER MAN THERE YOU ARE.
IRON MAN ORDERED
SO YOU FINALLY ANSWERED ONE OF OUR CALLS
YEP. THAT S ME. YOU SAY "AVENGERS." I SAY "ASSEMBLE."
GOOD CAUSE WE NEED EVERYBODY ON THIS ONE
REALLY? WHAT S UP?
05



MAKE SURE THAT THERE IS A REASON FOR EVERYTHING

"Especially when you're doing an action sequence! The most important thing for an action sequence is that it can't just be there for the sake of the action. There has to be some kind of heart behind it. You have to know what all the characters in the action sequence want and the action should reflect that. It might be that they want to do this very specific thing and so much is on the line if they don't get it done. Also why do they need to do it? If the characters are not emotionally invested in why you're having the action scene, then there's no reason to do it. It can't just be something blowing up for the sake of blowing something up. It has to blow up and mean something to the characters. Otherwise it won't mean anything to the readers."

KEEP YOUR ARTIST'S INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS IN MIND

"It depends on what kind of stuff they like to draw but also what kind of stuff the story needs. There's also the reality that when you get to work on a book like *Amazing Spider-Man*, you know that everybody working on the book is a pro and that they can do whatever you need them to do. Otherwise they wouldn't be on *Amazing Spider-Man*. And that's a gift, to be able to work with artists as talented as Humberto Ramos **05**, Ryan Stegman and Giuseppe Camuncoli. So you really try to tailor what you're doing to them but at the end of the day, you know that they can deliver whatever you need and they will do it in their own style. There's something about that, which is just awesome."

JOCASTA, TRUST ME THIS IS NOT WHAT YOU THINK IT IS...
KTOOM
DOCTOR, MAYBE YOU'D BETTER SAVE THAT FOR LATER COMPANY'S HERE
JI TRON!
07

TEAM BOOKS VS SOLO TITLES

"I've written a couple of team books like *Great Lakes Avengers* **06** and *Mighty Avengers* **07** but I don't think I've cracked it yet and I've been in the industry for about 24 years. I think I work better with the solo characters. I usually find it easier to keep your focus on this guy and what he wants, and to make it about his personal struggle.

"When I was working on team books, you'll see that there were times like when, 'Hey, *Mighty Avengers* doesn't read like *Mighty Avengers*. It reads like Hank Pym and his Amazing Friends.' You could see that I had clearly picked my favourites. 'Here's Hank and here's Jocasta. Let's see what they're going to do.'"

EVEN AFTER TWO DECADES IN THE COMICS INDUSTRY, YOU STILL FIND YOURSELF LEARNING NEW THINGS

"I hope so! The scary thing about going solo on *Amazing Spider-Man* is that it's a book unlike any other. We're doing it twice a month and that's gruelling in that you have to feed multiple artists at the same time. So everything you're writing is out of sequence, as you'll be writing chapter one of this story and chapter two of that story at the same time. You have to figure out how all the puzzle pieces are going to link up. There are times where as you write something organically, things change in the story but they can't change too much because the train tracks have to meet up. That's the challenge of *Spider-Man*." »

Above: Slott has written the most so o ssues of *She-Hulk* · 33

LEARN TO JUGGLE YOUR SUBPLOTS

"There are times when I'm writing an issue of *Spider-Man* and let's say there's a Carlie Cooper subplot **08**. At the end of the day, you're not reading the book for that Carlie Cooper subplot; you're reading it for Spider-Man. There are moments when I'm like, 'I have to cut two pages so I'm cutting the Carlie Cooper sub-plot' and then I'm like 'Oh damn, I already gave one of the artists another script and it picks up from where this subplot should end, so I'll have to find a way to squeeze it in!' That would change if I were writing a monthly book, where I wouldn't have that problem."

08
I WIN!
SWEET!
DARELY BY INCHES
WELL, THIS'S MY STOP THANKS FOR RIDING WE TO WORK, SEE YOU LATER
LATER
CAN'T TELL YOU HOW OFTEN I'VE DREAMED OF THIS...

ADVERSITY CAN LEAD TO CREATIVITY

"Sometimes it's like it's the problems that help you build stories that are better and stronger because they force you to think your way through it. It's like when you watch the movie *Jaws*, it wouldn't be as good a movie as it is if the shark worked properly and Steven Spielberg hadn't had to keep coming up with new ways of showing you the shark without showing you the shark because it kept breaking down. You remember how silly the shark looked when it jumped up on deck and was eating Quinn? It would have looked even sillier if you saw the shark throughout the whole movie. Having the shark be like the camera, having it be in the shadows most of the time made *Jaws* the scariest movie of all time."

EMBRACE YOUR LIMITATIONS

"You look at *Star Wars* and in all the original movies, where George Lucas had budgets to worry about and people from above saying 'No' about things – they're stronger stories. Unlike when he had all the money in the world and could do whatever he wanted with computers and didn't really have anyone telling him no. Sometimes you need limitations; you need people to go, 'You can't do this, you must do that.'

"It's like when I first started doing *She-Hulk* **09**, one of her catch-phrases became 'Oh my gosh,' and that was because we had to change it the first time she said, 'Oh my god' because whatever the rating was, they didn't want the word 'god' in a *She-Hulk* book that week. So we had to come up with something else and then I just kind of owned it and made it her thing. So she said it throughout the whole run and I was like 'Wow!'

"A weird thing that was in my Peter Parker Spider-Man is that I had him say 'Son of a bitch' at one point when he was upset about something, but we couldn't do that. When it came down to fix it, he just did that thing you do when you stub your toe when there are children present. You change it so that you go 'Son of a… biscuit!' We've had him say 'son of a biscuit' multiple times. I'm sure that whoever the next writer is, they will drop that or not even notice it but somehow that kind of sums up my era of Spider-Man now." CH

TOTAL FILM

Now fully interactive on your iPad

Download 2 FREE issues!*

Interactive pages • Full screen trailers
Exclusive extra content

Download on the App Store

Search for 'Total Film' in the App Store
www.totalfilm.com/newsstand

* Download two free issues with a no obligation subscription. Offer applies to new subscribers only.
iPad is a trademark of Apple Inc., registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE COSMIC COMIC GALAXY

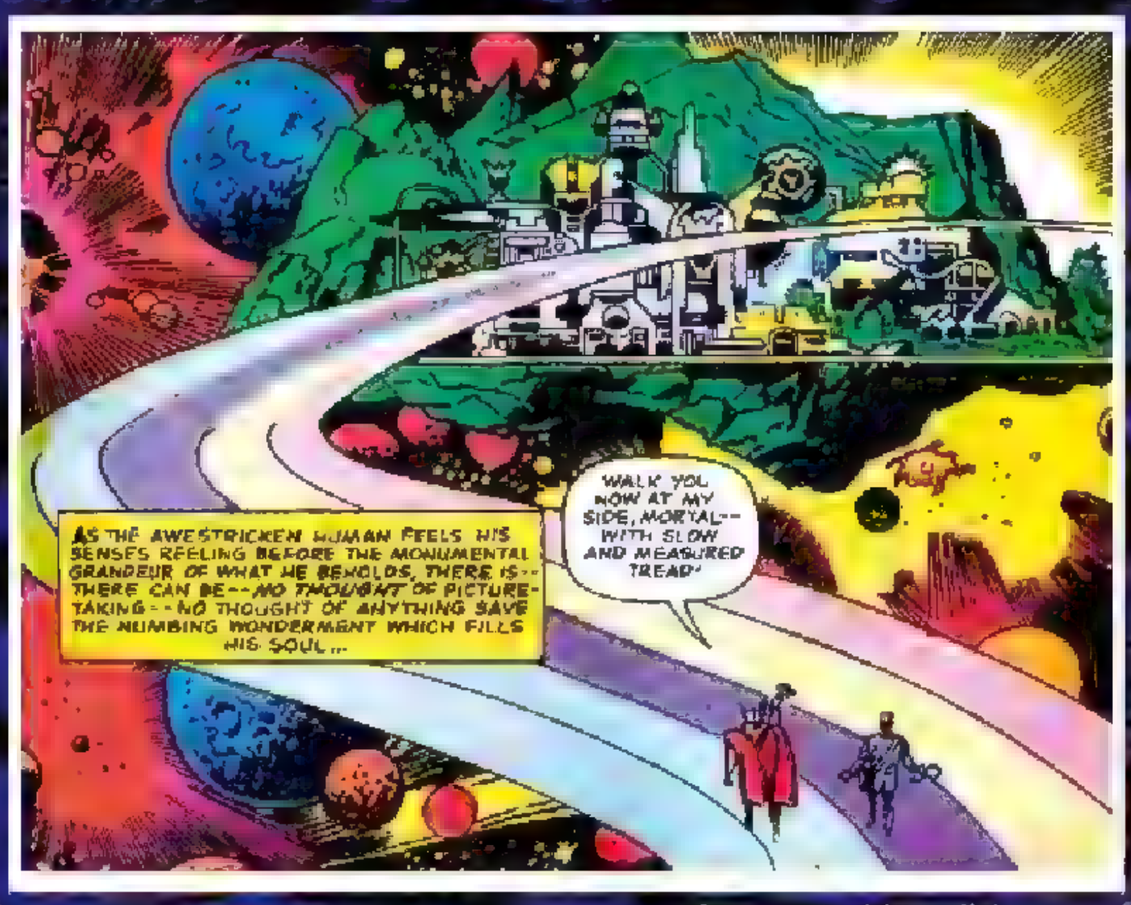
From sentient planets to shadowy embodiments of... well, everything, **Matt Bielby** is your guide through the 700* wonders of the universe...

(*minus 687 or so...)

Asgard

FIRST SEEN *JOURNEY INTO MYSTERY* #83 (OCT 1962)

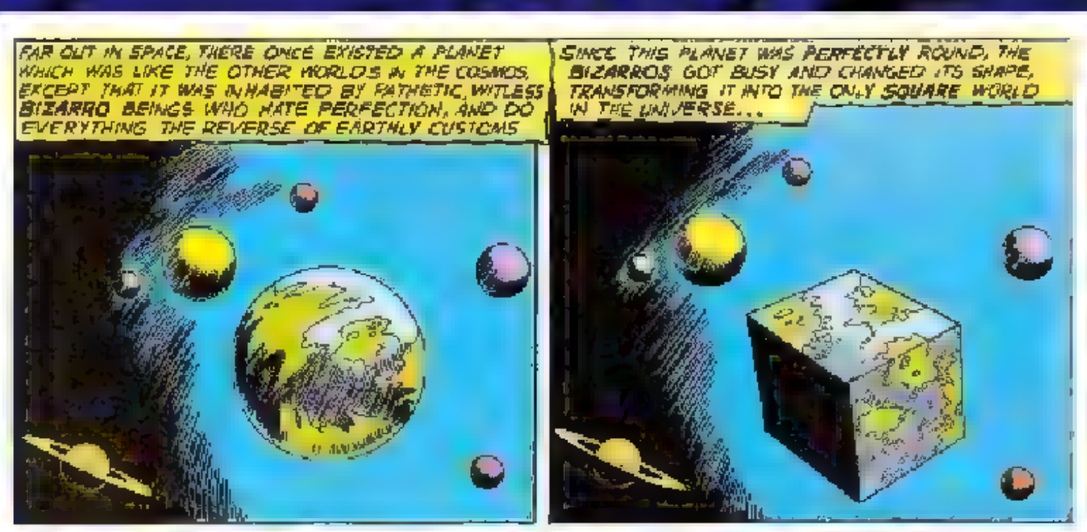
Jack Kirby may have created yet more impressive otherworlds later in his career but it all began with Asgard, home of Marvel's take on the Norse Gods. A gleaming city of wonders, it's half Medieval or barbarian and half sci-fi spectacular on the corner of a continent floating in space, its link to Earth a Rainbow Bridge you could ride a horse across. Most early *Thor* adventures were largely Earth-bound, but, with the addition of the much-admired, fairytale-esque "Tales Of Asgard" back-up strips from *Journey Into Mystery* #97 on, we started to explore this fantastical world, and every new element – from Jotunheim, home of the Frost Giants, to Muspelheim with its Fire Demons – had jaws hitting knees and floors in amazement.


AS THE AWE-STRICKEN HUMAN FEELS HIS SENSES REELING BEFORE THE MONUMENTAL GRANDEUR OF WHAT HE BEHOLDS, THERE IS--THERE CAN BE--NO THOUGHT OF PICTURE-TAKING--NO THOUGHT OF ANYTHING SAVE THE NUMBING WONDERMENT WHICH FILLS HIS SOUL...
WALK YOU NOW AT MY SIDE, MORTAL--WITH SLOW AND MEASURED TREAD!

Apokolips

FIRST SEEN *THE NEW GODS* #1 (FEB 1971)

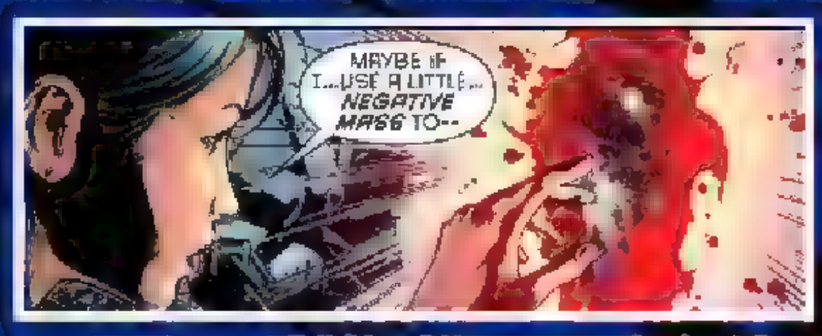
Perhaps the single most memorable planet in all comics, Apokolips is, "a dismal, unclean place ... an armed camp where those who live with weapons rule the wretches who build them ... [where] life is evil and death the great goal." Blimey! Ruled by Darkseid it's a flame-belching, Hell-like factory planet, where all life is committed to Darkseid's dreams of conquest, and acquisition of the dreaded Anti-Life Equation. Totally built-over, studded with vast firepits and infested with parademons, it's a nightmare of the Industrial Revolution, and a symbol of corruption and oppression unrivalled in comics.


FAR OUT IN SPACE, THERE ONCE EXISTED A PLANET WHICH WAS LIKE THE OTHER WORLDS IN THE COSMOS, EXCEPT THAT IT WAS INHABITED BY PATHETIC, WITLESS BIZARRO BEINGS WHO HATE PERFECTION, AND DO EVERYTHING THE REVERSE OF EARTHLY CUSTOMS
SINCE THIS PLANET WAS PERFECTLY ROUND, THE BIZARROS GOT BUSY AND CHANGED ITS SHAPE, TRANSFORMING IT INTO THE ONLY SQUARE WORLD IN THE UNIVERSE...

Bizarro World

FIRST SEEN *ACTION COMICS* #263 (APR 1960)

One of the great creations of the charming, inventive, perfectly crafted early '60s *Superman* was Bizarro World (sometimes referred to as "Htrae", which is "Earth" spelt backwards), where society operates by the strangest code. "Us do opposite of all Earthly things! Us hate beauty! Us love ugliness! Is big crime to make anything perfect on Bizarro World!" A cube-shaped planet, it's populated by Bizarro versions of all the big Superman mythos characters. There's an easily frightened Yellow Lantern with a useless ring, an Aquaman who can't swim, a Joker who's the only sane person there ... and Bizarro No.1 – a mirror-image Frankenstein's monster take on Superman, who'd first been introduced a couple of years earlier.



The Bleed

FIRST SEEN *STORMWATCH* VOL 2. #7 (MAY 1998)

A blood-red nowhere realm that now appears in DC comics. The Bleed is explained as the "superposed channel between universes". Created by Warren Ellis and Bryan Hitch, The Bleed's most memorable appearances have been in their *The Authority* comics where a 50-mile long shiftship, The Carrier, cruises through the higher dimensions, its presence always heralded by a particularly memorable slice of Ellis prose: "moving downwake through the Devachanic realm at a speed of 25 dreams per second..." and all that.

Ego the Living Planet

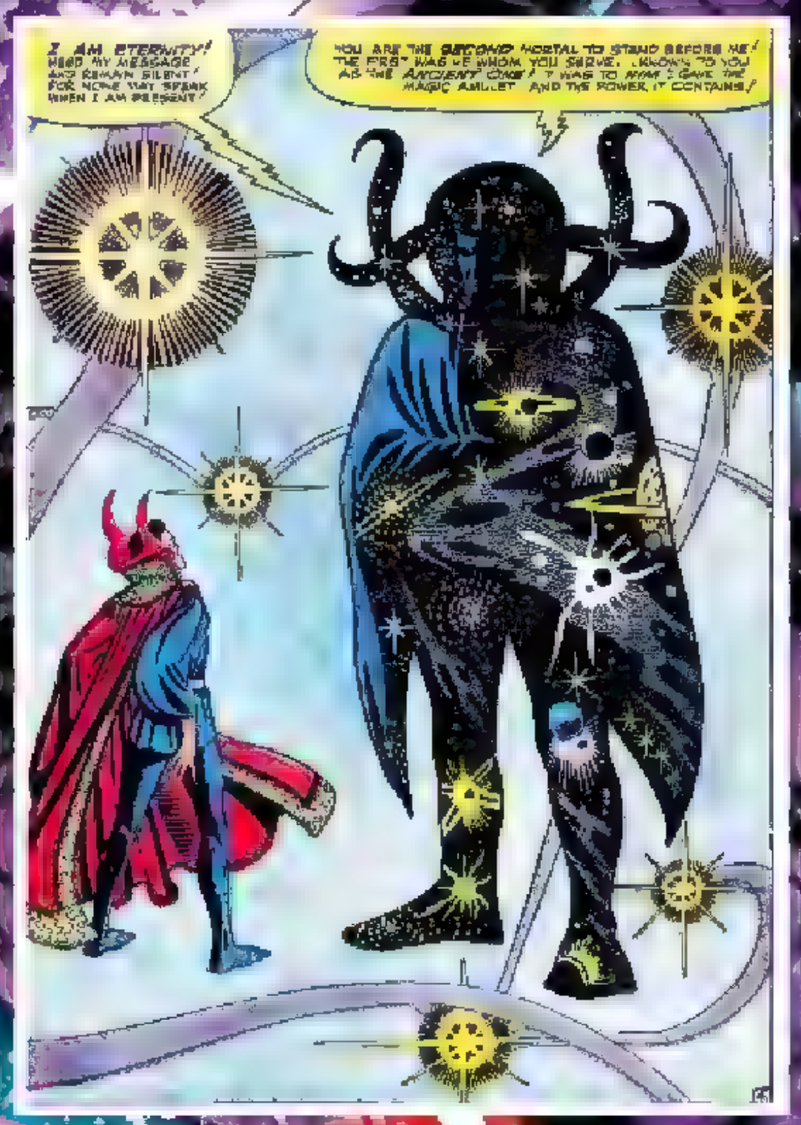
FIRST SEEN *THOR* #132 (SEP 1966)

It seems ridiculous to call an entire planet a supervillain – but not to Jack Kirby, who was tossing out bizarre lost worlds and incredible cosmic villains every issue in mid-'60s *Thor* and *Fantastic Four*. Ego was a nefarious sentient world of near limitless power and malevolence who lurked within the Black Galaxy. When Thor first met him he introduced himself as "the largest, most powerful intelligence in all of infinity! You are like dust unto my feet!" (We suspect he meant "under", but who are we to argue with someone who possesses "powers without end"?) Along with Galactus, the Silver Surfer, the Kree and the Colonizers of Rigel, Ego's one of the building blocks of Marvel's space-mythology.

Eternity

FIRST SEEN *STRANGE TALES* #138 (NOV 1965)

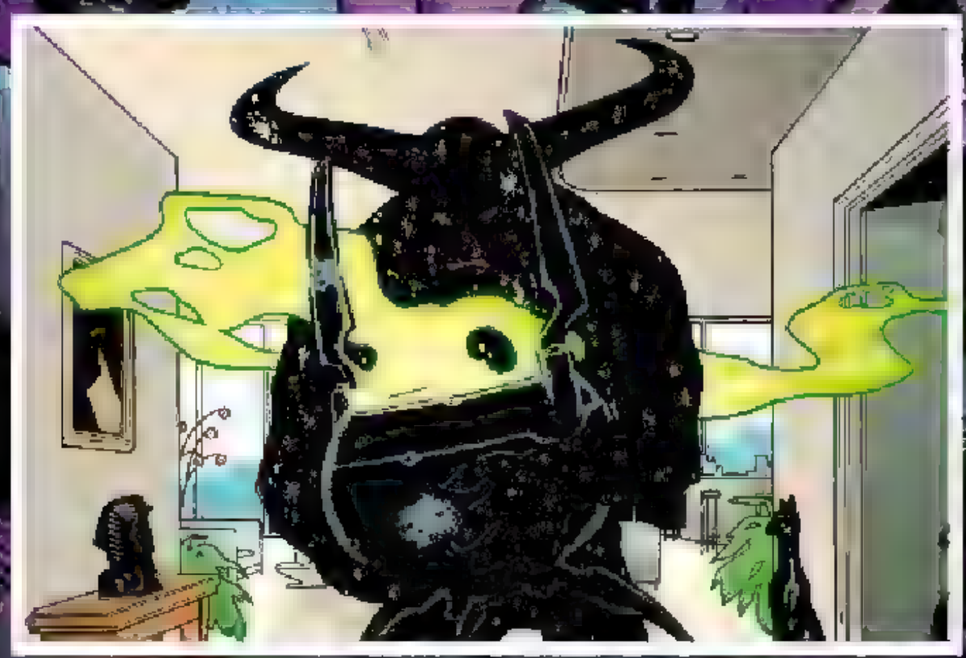
The Steve Ditko *Doctor Strange* comics always stood apart: packed with strange otherworlds, heaving with avaricious dark lords, garnished with strange poetic incantations and altogether more eerie, more hallucinatory than your standard comics. One of its greatest creations was Eternity, introduced in the middle of the strip's third [illegible] revealed to be nothing less than the physical embodiment of all [illegible] and "the most powerful mystic entity of all". Appearing as a shadowy giant in cloak and helmet, inside whom we can see stars and galaxies whirl, he's immortal, virtually omnipotent, unknowable – yet constantly in need of Strange and others to free him from entrapment or save him.


I AM ETERNITY! HEED MY MESSAGE AND REMAIN SILENT! FOR NONE MAY SPEAK WHEN I AM PRESENT!
YOU ARE THE SECOND MORTAL TO STAND BEFORE ME! THE FIRST WAS HE WHOM YOU SERVE. KNOWN TO YOU AS THE ANCIENT ONE! IT WAS TO HIM I GAVE THE MAGIC AMULET AND THE POWER IT CONTAINS!

Galactus

FIRST SEEN *FANTASTIC FOUR* #48 (MAR 1966)

The most famous, most memorable of Marvel's cosmic-scale bad guys – a purple-clad giant who eats worlds to survive, and sports the most dramatic of helmets – Galactus was inspired by the need to always do bigger, better, more, and by Jack Kirby's reading of the Bible. Over the years he's appeared time and again, fought just about everybody and seems impervious to just about any humiliation Marvel's creators or editorial team can come up with. No matter how many times an attempt is made to vaguely humanise Galactus, or demonstrate how some new cosmic nobody is a force to be reckoned with by having him outclass the Big G, it backfires. All that happens is we're reminded of what an immense creation this really was, and how weedy all pretenders look in comparison. The Dude abides.



Qward

FIRST SEEN *GREEN LANTERN* VOL 2 #2 (OCT 1960)

An alien planet in an antimatter universe that's in large part the exact opposite of our own. Qward acts as a counterpart to Oa – home of the Guardians of the Universe and the Green Lantern Corps – and provides its own universe with a similarly [illegible] rather more tyrannical force: the Qwardians and their weaponers of Qward. The problem, of course, is that this entire universe is evil – or at least a place where greed and selfishness are the dominant philosophies – making any sort of tourist trip there decidedly ill-advised.

QWARD, DEEP IN THE HEART OF THE ANTI-MATTER UNIVERSE
31ST CENTURY
THE RINGS HAD LOST THEIR FIRE – THE THUNDERBOLTS THEIR FURY, LONG BEFORE I EVER ENTERED THE WORLD
TO ME, QWARD HAS EVER BEEN A COLD, HARD, BRUTAL PLACE

Neh-Buh-Loh

FIRST SEEN *JLA* #12 (NOV 1997) AS NEBULA MAN; *JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA* #100 (AUG 1972)

The DC Universe loves sentient natural phenomena but there's little more impressive than an entire sentient universe. Established in elaborate backstory by writer Grant Morrison, Neh-Buh-Loh then appeared in books like 2005's *JLA: Classified*, where he seems to be a villain, and finally in Morrison's epic *Seven Soldiers* crossover, where this now "grown up" universe is one of the main antagonists. A particularly noble, soft-hearted and handsome cosmic villain – he looks like a man-sized version of Marvel's Eternity and is based in part on the huntsman who fails to kill Snow White in the fairytale – he's finally defeated, but is such an intriguing, potent creation it would be a real shame if we were never to see him again.

ELFIN TOWERS REAR UPWARD INTO THE SKY WHILE ALL AROUND THEM GOLDEN FOUNTAINS AND WATERS SPLASH WITH GENTLE MUSIC...
IT'S LIKE A WONDERLAND!
I'VE HEARD MY FATHER DESCRIBE SAMAKAND -- BUT HIS WORDS WERE INADEQUATE TO DESCRIBE ITS BREATH TAKING BEAUTY!

Rann

FIRST SEEN *SHOWCASE* #17 (NOV-DEC 1958)

It's a planet you just want to pick up and shake: amazing technology (their Zeta Beam can transport a man from Earth to the Polaris system in no time at all); an incredible history (complete with four-eyed dinosaurs!); and yet a totally useless, apathetic population, unable to procreate and relying on robots (always risky!) and a sleek, optimistic Earth explorer called Adam Strange, who they've equipped with rocket pack and fancy gun, to save them from any and all threats. And what threats they are: an intelligent tornado called Ulthoon, an energy vampire called Starbreaker, a small, tentacled planet; a sentient, two-fisted cloud... It's for these – plus the giant magnifying glasses, man-eating vacuum cleaners and globe-headed elves with a penchant for turning people into crystal – that we celebrate Rann, not it's dopey human-ish inhabitants.

Supreme Intelligence

FIRST SEEN *FANTASTIC FOUR* #65 (AUG 1967)

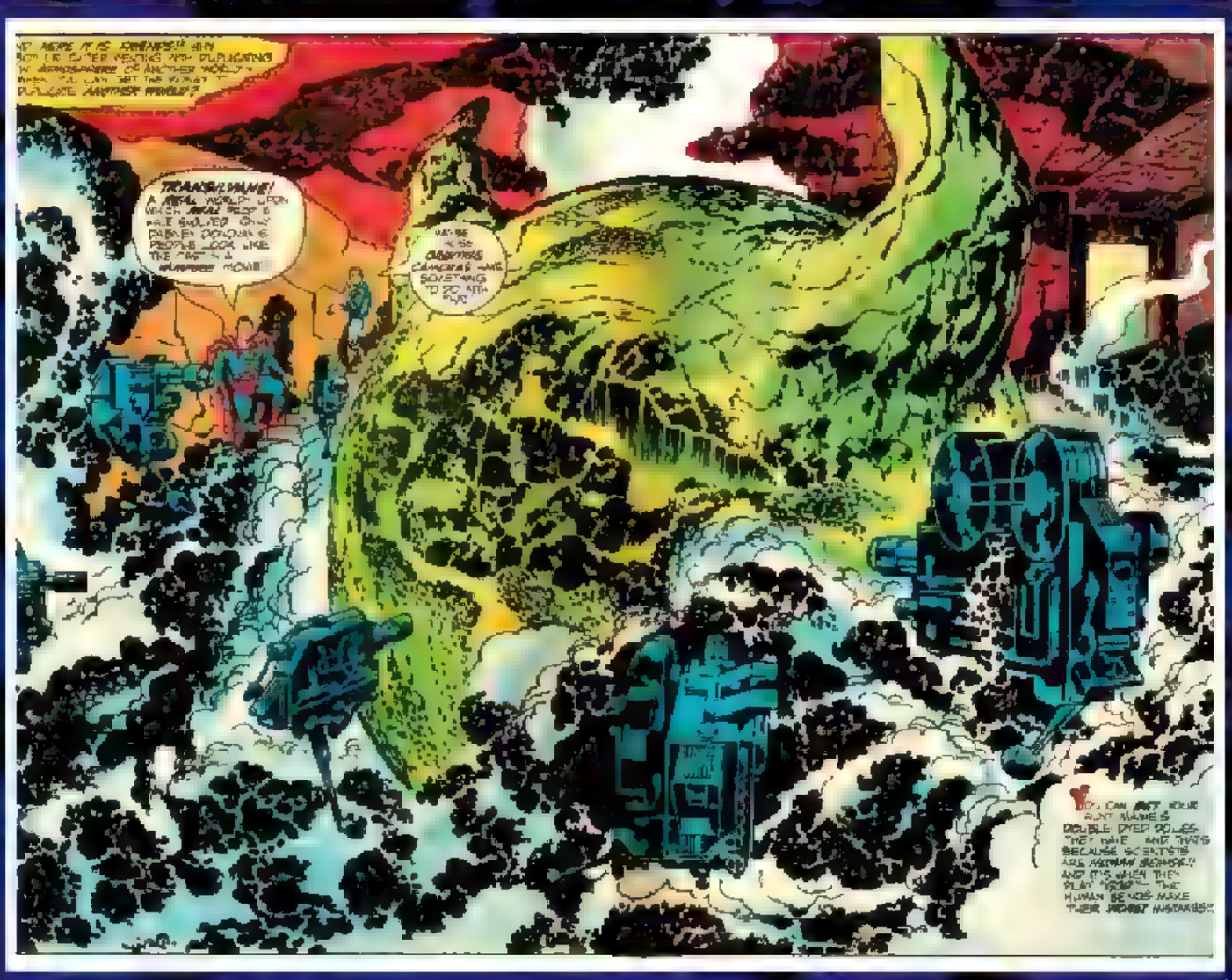
Created the same year as the Great Intelligence from *Doctor Who*, the "Supreme Intelligence of the majestic race of the Kree" was an elusive sort at first, disappearing after only one panel to later reappear across the Marvel Universe here and there, an arch behind-the-scenes manipulator distinguished by a classic villain's arrogant attitude, and a brilliant Kirby visual: he's a vast green head-cum-computer with wires and piping for hair, kept in a massive tank, and built of the cryogenically preserved brains of all the best Kree thinkers over the centuries. Though often depicted as a villain, the SI is not totally without redeeming features: early doors it refused to build a new Cosmic Cube, knowing what a headache they can be.

...AND MADE SILENT.
LAYING DEATH, THEY DARE NOT KILL THE SUPREME INTELLIGENCE IF IT BE LIVING DEATH ACCUSER
I AM NO LONGER THE ACCUSER
BUT STILL KREE STILL LOYAL
HOUSE OF SHO HAS PAID FOR THEIR CRIMES
TO THE END HE MOURNED YOUR UNFOUNDED FALL FROM GRACE HE CALLED TO YOU, ACCUSER, PETITIONED FORGIVENESS FOR THE WAYWARD KREE

Transilvane

FIRST SEEN *SUPERMAN'S PAL, JIMMY OLSEN* #142 (OCT 1971)

It was NASA's biggest mistake: an artificial planet, created to help simulate and study extraterrestrial environments, that ended up being seeded with miniature people and animals and then bombarded with old-school horror films projected onto the clouds. The result? An entire population of tiny "Transilvanians" who believe they are vampires, werewolves, zombies, mummies et al. One of Jack Kirby's more light-hearted DC creations of the early '70s, Transilvane acted like a horror version of Superman's Bottle City of Kandor – a place villains could come from (boosted up to Earth-size by super-science) or regular-size heroes could be shrunken down to go visit. The best thing of all about Transilvane, though, are the two horn-like spikes it proudly sports, like a particularly mean-spirited Space Hopper – this is an entire planet that simply looks evil.


TRANSILVANE! A METAL WORLD UPON WHICH REAL PEOPLE HAVE SOLVED ONLY PARTLY DIFFICULT PROBLEMS. PEOPLE LOOK LIKE THE CAST IN A MONSTER MOVIE
CANCERS HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH RAYS

Termight

FIRST SEEN *2000 AD* #167 (JUL 1980)

In terms of sheer imaginative invention, Pat Mills sometimes comes across as the British Jack Kirby, and Termight – a far future Earth, rendered uninhabitable on the surface, and thus riddled with caves, tunnels and "Terror Tubes" where a frightened, violent mankind huddles – is one of his greatest inventions. (It doesn't hurt, of course, that all the classic depictions were rendered by the amazing Kevin O'Neill, with his clarity, grotesquery, clean lines and wicked sense of humour.) In a universe where fascist religious zealot humans are the bad guys – and ugly, amoral aliens our heroes – the rigid, buried, closed off, painfully complicated geography of Termight is the perfect backdrop

THE COSMIC

Marvel has always been Cosmic, of course. The modern company grew out of the 1950s Atlas Comics, publishers of science fiction and giant monster anthology titles called things like *Journey Into Mystery* and *Strange Tales*, where mammoth space beasts like Xemnu the Living Hulk menaced tiny, ant-like men.

By the start of the '60s, however, the company had been renamed Marvel, and long-underwear titles – inspired by the recent superhero revival over at DC – began to appear. These, too, were broadly Cosmic, with *The Fantastic Four* #1 (November 1961) revolving around the space race, cosmic rays and monsters from the centre of the Earth. By *FF* #2 Marvel's first species of dangerously advanced, exclusively hostile aliens had emerged – "the Skrulls from outer space" – and interstellar enemies would crop up regularly from here on in, not just in the *FF*, but in *Thor* (which mixed ancient mythology and space opera with surprisingly satisfying results), *Hulk* and *The Avengers*. Even the domestic, urban and relatively low-key Spider-Man fought aliens as early as *Amazing Spider-Man* #2.

More recently, of course, Cosmic Marvel has been a grab-bag term for the company's assorted space-based characters and space-opera storylines. Anything involving the Silver Surfer or Warlock, Nova or Captain Marvel is routinely dubbed Cosmic, as are the endless machinations of space empires like the Kree, the Shi'ar or, indeed, those long-enduring Skrulls. Space has become a vast "corner" of the Marvel Universe that's bubbled along merrily over the decades, but has really come into its own over the past eight years or so, initially under creators like Keith Giffen, Dan Abnett and Andy Lanning, who gave the whole Cosmic idea a rocket up its arse with the 2006 crossover *Annihilation* and follow-ups like *Annihilation: Conquest* and *War Of Kings*. Suddenly characters like Nova, the Silver Surfer, Super-Skrull, the Guardians of the Galaxy, the now-space-based Inhumans and many more were front-and-centre – and with the upcoming *Guardians Of The Galaxy* film introducing the whole idea of superheroes-in-space to a mass audience this summer, it looks unlikely to be going away any time soon.

All well and good, then – except none of this is what we're referring to as Cosmic Marvel here. Not exactly.

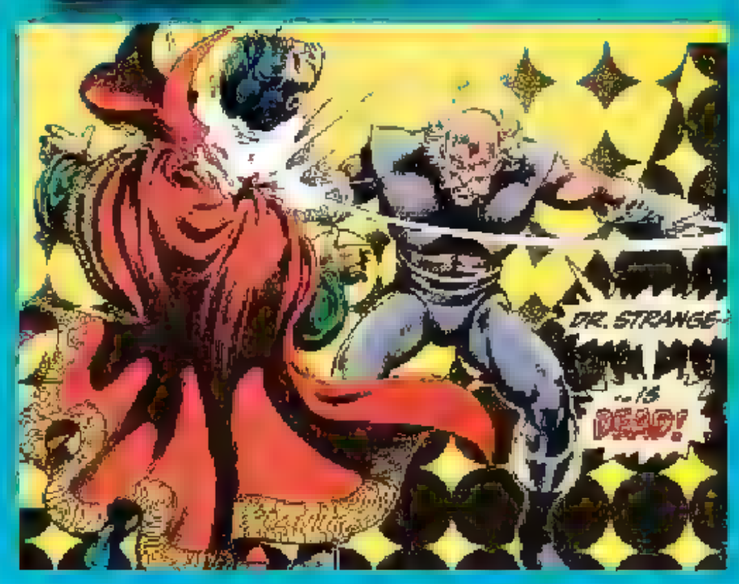
THE GREAT EARLY COSMIC MOMENT IN MARVEL'S HISTORY WAS THE FANTASTIC FOUR'S FIRST ENCOUNTER WITH GALACTUS

Instead, let's wind the clock back to the early '70s, a time when Marvel enjoyed one of the most exciting, experimental and artistically satisfying periods in its history; a time when innovative young creators like Steve Gerber, Steve Englehart and Jim Starlin were stretching the company this way and that, and Cosmic began to refer not just to stories exploring the far edges of the Marvel Universe, or ones that threw at us vast, otherworldly "Powers Beyond Human Comprehension", but tales that delved into the "inner space" of the human psyche too. Here's where many key space-faring characters – Captain Marvel, Thanos, Adam Warlock, The Man Called Nova – were born or defined, and others, like Doctor Strange, sent in fascinating new directions. This is when Marvel was truly Cosmic. »

COSMIC

The Marvel Universe has always heaved with aliens and space adventure, and with troubled heroes too. For a brief period in the early '70s the two came together, and the results were truly Cosmic By **Matt Bielby**

Jim Starlin took space Messiah Adam Warlock to new Cosmic heights.
THE FIRST OF THESE EVENTS TAKES PLACE IN OUR OWN STAR-SYSTEM OF SOL, WHERE WE FIND OUR HERO, ADAM WARLOCK, MOST SINGULARLY DISTRESSED.
WHY?
WHY HAVE THE FATES SO CONSPIRED AGAINST ME?
BEFORE ME RESTS THE STAR OF MY BIRTH, AND MY HOMEWORLD EARTH.
YET, AS CLOSE AS IT IS, TELLUS IS NOW FOR-EVER BEYOND MY REACH.
I CAN NEVER AGAIN GO HOME!



BUT, FOR RICK JONES, THERE ARE OTHER, MORE ASTONISHING VISIONS...
IMAGE: THE KREE-BORN MAR-VELL, PORING GRIMLY OVER SOMETHING CALLED THE OMNI-WAVE, IN THE DISTANT ANDROMEDA GALAXY...
IMAGE: IN A NEARBY CHAMBER, QUICKSILVER AND THE SCARLET WITCH, HOLDING AT BAY A SQUADRON OF KILL-CRAZED SKRULLS...
WHAT NEWBORN SIXTH SENSE TELLS RICK THAT THESE SCENES--ALL OF THEM--ARE OCCURRING SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN FAR FLUNG CORNERS OF THE COSMOS
STAN LEE PRESENTS THE GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY!
ONCE UPON A TIME...
THE SILVER SURFER!
HAVING FINALLY ENDED THE GALAXY ANNIHILATING THREAT OF THE TOPOGRAPHICAL MAN, THE GUARDIANS, ONCE AGAIN ABOARD THE STARSHIP CAPTAIN AMERICA, ENCOUNTER A STRANGE AND INTERESTING OBJECT FLOATING IN DEEP SPACE.
WE GOT IT, MARTINEX!
SO WE HAVE, CHARLIE BIT... I FAIL TO UNDERSTAND WHY YOU INSISTED ON ACCOMPANYING ME.
I COULD HAVE EASILY RETRIEVED THIS DEVICE BY MYSELF, AND I NEED NO SPACE SUIT
HARKOV'S BONES, MAN! I USED TO BE A MILITIAMAN, REMEMBER? THERE WAS NOTHING IN BASIC TRAINING I ENJOYED BETTER THAN A GOOD OLD FASHIONED SPACE-WALK! WHY, DO YOU KNOW-
HEY, YOU TWO! IF YOU'VE GOT THAT THING, CUT THE CHATTER AND GET BACK IN HERE. . .ON THE DOUBLE!
#LAST ISSUE ARCHIE.
A TALE OF TWO TIMES--AS TOLD BY
(30TH CENTURY) ROGER STERN, WRITER AL MILGROM, PENCILER BOB WIACEK, INKER J.HOWARD LETTERS & WEIN, COLORS
(20TH CENTURY) STAN LEE, WRITER JOHN BUSCEMA, PENCILER JOE SINNOTT, INKER SAM ROSEN LETTERER
ARCHIE GOODWIN--EDITOR OF SPACE AND TIME!
MARVEL PRESENTS is published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022
Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019. Vol. 1 No. 8, December, 1976. Price 35¢ per copy in the U.S. and Canada.
Canada $15.00. Foreign $20.00. Printed in the U.S.A.

The new era saw a totally transformed *Captain Marvel*.

THE NEW CAPTAIN MARVEL WAS IMMEDIATELY A KEY PLAYER IN THE MIGHTY KREE-SKRULL WAR STORYLINE – AND SOON HE'D BE FACING OFF AGAINST THANOS

The man who stalked the stars

Thor had set the pace early doors, with space opera and heavy mythological elements colliding across the middle-'60s, the concepts getting bigger and wilder with every issue. The great early Cosmic moment in Marvel's history, however, was the Fantastic Four's classic first encounter with Galactus (*FF* #48-50): here our heroes were totally outfaced, up against a villain who was virtually God, and served by a powerful, seemingly troubled underling – was this the fallen angel Lucifer, or perhaps the Wandering Jew? – who could, just maybe, be turned to our side.

The later Cosmic creators of the early and mid-'70s had read all this and learned from it, of course, but they took note of a less obvious Lee/Kirby masterstroke too. Each of the classic Cosmic epics would be punctuated by smaller, more domestic human scenes – or even entire issues – giving the reader a chance to catch breath, and reminding them that Marvel wasn't all space gods and über-aliens, but that characters resembling actual living, loving, thinking people were mixed up in this stuff too. The early '70s creators remembered this, and ran with it – and perhaps with even more poignancy. After all, it was a time when American youth was questioning everything, not least their own country – Vietnam was at fever pitch – and so Marvel served up heroes who were doing much the same thing.

Of course, in '60s Marvel nobody had moped on quite such an epic scale as the Silver Surfer, God's Lonely Man, forever questioning his actions and his purpose. But now some early '70s characters – like the Jim Starlin versions of Captain Marvel and Warlock – could match him tear for tear, the one a soldier who'd end up a peacenik and a minor god, the other already a sort of god, so he'd go the other way, becoming ever more human and suicidal as his run went on.

In every way it was a period of huge change. By the start of the '70s Marvel had lost Jack Kirby – a fall-out with Stan Lee over the Silver Surfer had been the final straw – and, to some large degree, Lee himself, seduced by the California entertainment industry. Yet, at more or less the same time, the company had seen an opportunity to expand hugely, and was now taking on all sorts of untried talent to make up the shortfall and keep the books flying out the door. These new guys

Starlin's mosaic of tiny panels, in *Captain Marvel* #28, manages to communicate events with barely any words at all.

sometimes struggled with their craft, but they certainly didn't lack ambition, or ideas; more, they were the first generation who'd never seen comics as a mere stepping stone to other, more respectable and better paid fields of illustration, but as an end in its own right.

The Marvel of the '60s had been pretty much a closed shop, making use of long-established professionals from Gene Colan to John Buscema – with Kirby on the creative heavy lifting, of course – all through their first decade, and only a handful of new boys (Roy Thomas, Neal Adams, a couple of others) had got their foot through the door. But now – in this era of 'Nam and Watergate – there was all this new material that needed churning out, and the sandbox had gotten so big that there were plenty of places to play.

One of the first poster boys for all this was Captain Marvel, who'd been totally transformed: gone was the original version, who'd made his debut in a 1967 issue of *Marvel Super-Heroes* wearing a white-and-green Kree-issue space suit. Though he'd never properly taken off, the idea had always been sound – here was a classic John Dunbar/Jake Sully type, the agent of an advanced, arrogant empire sent to tame a more primitive civilisation but who ends up siding with the opposition instead. It's just the execution that had been lacking. Now, however, that guy was history, and in his place was... what? Well, for one thing a much cooler character, that much was clear.

Gone was the goofy finned helmet, replaced by the best barnet in the Marvel Universe (this side of the Inhumans' Medusa, at least). In came tongue-in-cheek references to the more established Fawcett/DC "Big Red Cheese" Captain Marvel – including a teen alter-ego with whom he now "magically" swapped places every time he needed to fly into action – and a costume sharing a blue/red/yellow colour scheme with that of the greatest superhero of them all.

More importantly, the stakes had been upped hugely: while the original, pre-Cosmic Captain Marvel had struggled with a psychotic commanding officer, saved assorted Earth rocket sites, and enjoyed various skirmishes with a yellow-skinned, rarely-referenced-since alien species called the Aakon, the new version was immediately a key player in the mighty Kree-Skrull War, the biggest fan-favourite storyline of the era. And soon he'd be facing off against Thanos, one of the most impressive villains in the entire Marvel Universe.

Before rocking up at Marvel, writer/artist Jim Starlin had drawn his own *Doctor Strange*-esque amateur comic – *Doctor Weird, Master of the Macabre* – while stationed with the US Navy in Vietnam: it was not a particularly Cosmic storyline, though the hero looked exactly like his later creation Drax the Destroyer, a *Captain Marvel* supporting character who went on to be one of the current Guardians of the Galaxy. The beginnings of Starlin's unmistakable style were clear from the off too: his work was a 50-50 mix of Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby, though some saw dashes of Joe Kubert and Gil Kane thrown in. Starlin, it seemed, was taking Ditko's ever-more-abstract mid-'60s *Doctor Strange* stories – the ones that went really surreal, introducing such potent

figures as Eternity, a universe that stands like a man – and welding them to Cosmic Kirby.

Post-Nam, Starlin had done a bit of art director work for Marvel, drawn a Beast story in *Amazing Adventures*, then did a couple of inventive-but-ropey *Iron Man* issues – these were, perhaps, the first "real" Starlin, and introduced a surprisingly skinny looking Thanos. (Later, Roy Thomas suggested beefing him up hugely, to "show DC how to do Darkseid.")

None of these had been great works – certainly, Stan Lee had been less than impressed – but new editor-in-chief Roy Thomas, desperate for talent, saw something in him, and soon shifted Starlin over to the about-to-be-cancelled *Captain Marvel*. He allowed Starlin to write a small portion of #28 too, before booting out the understandably pissed-off writing incumbent, Marv Wolfman, to accommodate this new kid as writer and artist both.

Starlin's run on *Captain Marvel* has become legendary, as has his subsequent work on *Warlock* in *Strange Tales* and then, subsequently, his own book. These were stories about the meaning of life, about psychology and politics. They were packed with imaginative battles and religious imagery – amongst many crucifixions, we at one point saw Cosmic being Chronos spread-eagled in space, each nail an entire planet – and heaved with evil doubles and doppelgängers. ("We have met the enemy and he is us," and all that.) Most of all, these comics were utterly obsessed with death. Warlock killed himself at the end – twice! – and Thanos did everything for a go on Death's boney bod.

"Stan gave the characters he created '60s TV personalities," Starlin once explained, "instead of letting them be cardboard cut-out heroes like Superman and Batman were under Mort Weisinger. In the '70s we came in and gave them Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test personalities – trying to put superheroes into a very different head space."

It was all supremely ambitious, but playful too. Brilliantly, on one issue – #179 of the Warlock-starring *Strange Tales* – a cheeky Starlin had modified the Comics Code Authority stamp on the cover to read, instead, "Approved by the Cosmic Code"

A separate reality

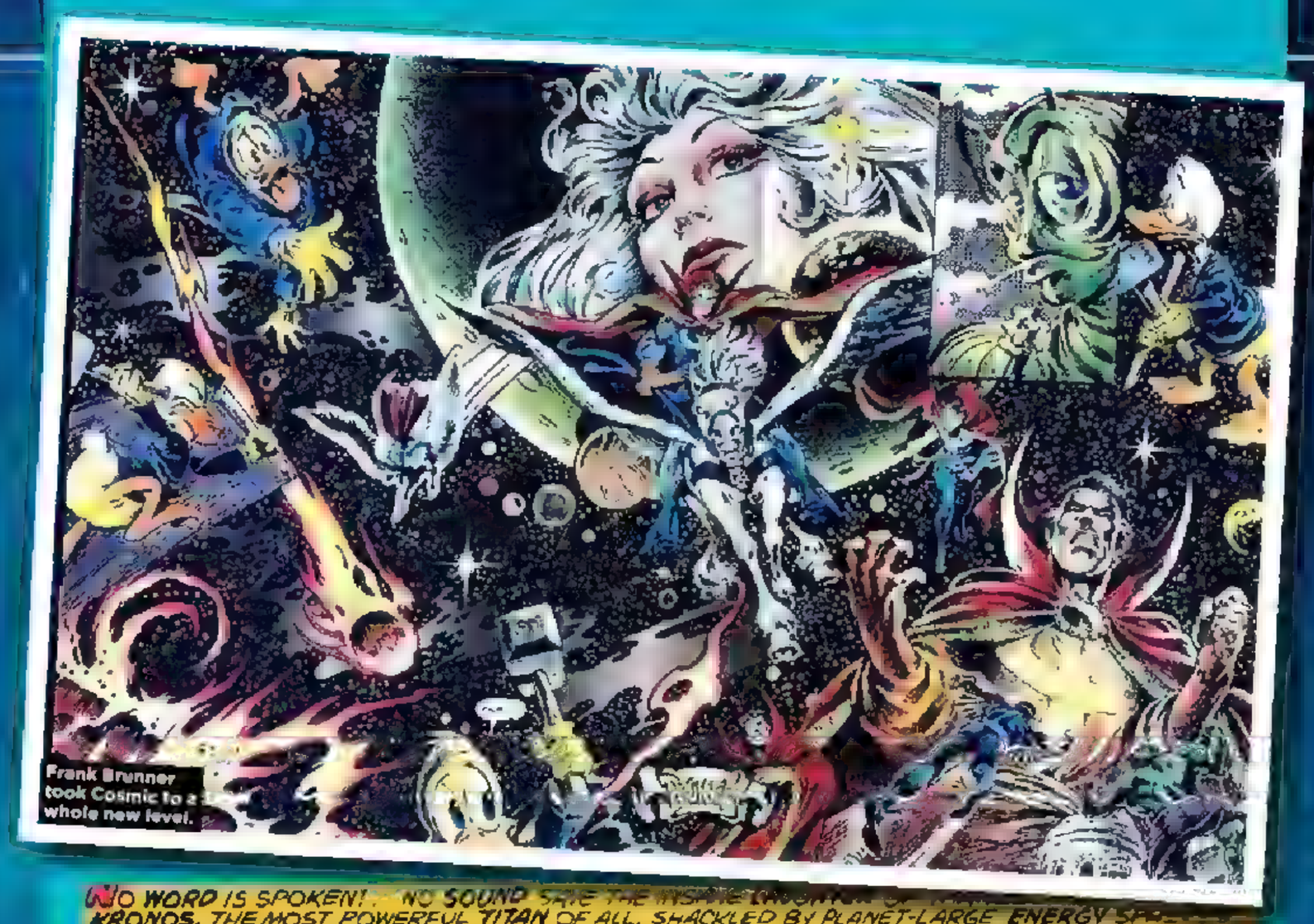
Meanwhile, elsewhere, things were getting exciting on some of the other books too. Many of the most far-out ideas at Marvel at the time came from the two Steves – Gerber and Englehart, writers both – who'd somehow both got past the usual fan-turned-pro inclination to rock no boats and just reproduce the comics they'd loved as a kids. The Steves weren't interested in that: they loved Marvel's history, but they wanted to create new stuff from it. Neither, it turned out, had ever met a twist or new direction they didn't like and – like Starlin – they were soon dragging in personal experiences and real-world concerns to take mainstream superhero comics in whole new directions.

Not that either was currently looking after the most Cosmic of comics – but they did unlikely things with what they had anyway. (This, after all, was the period where Englehart had Captain America giving up his patriotic identity and becoming Nomad for a spell.) Of course, in time both would get their chance...

6
100 PAGE COLLECTORS SPECIAL!
MARVEL TREASURY EDITION™
DOCTOR STRANGE™
THE MOST MYSTICAL HERO OF ALL!
$1.50
02930
ON OF
PREME!
WITH THAT, HE BREAKS HIMSELF, AND GROWS, AND GROWS, TO FILL THE MAMMOTH FORM HE INHABITS -TO FEEL DEATH'S TOUCH ON ALL OF HIM AT ONCE -
-AND HE DIES
BUT SUDDENLY, THE UNIVERSE AROUND HIS BODY BEGINS TO SHUDDER, LIKE THE FLANKS OF SOME RAGING BEAST- AND THEN, EVEN MORE QUICKLY, IT STARTS TO FALL AWAY FROM HIM...
-THE PLANETS RUSHED OUT BEHIND HIM IN ALL DIRECTIONS, ACCELERATING TOWARD A VANISHING SPEED...
PORTAL TO THE PAST!

Part of what made everything so fresh and new was a subtly different atmosphere at Marvel, and it came from the top. Under Roy Thomas, the more consistent Marvel house style of the old-school Stan-and-Jack comics had become less important somehow; Stan used to push everyone towards drawing like Kirby, John Buscema or John Romita, but now people were using all sorts of different styles, and getting away with it. When a young artist called Frank Brunner went in to show off a bunch of pages featuring monsters that he'd done – he loved Frank Frazetta and the underground comix scene, but had mainly been working on mystery books like Marvel's *Chamber Of Chills* and assorted Warren titles – Thomas took one look and said, "Well, we're now doing Doctor Strange fighting various Lovecraftian monsters, so do you fancy that?"

Indeed, Doctor Strange had just been relaunched as a solo hero in try-out book *Marvel Premiere*, with art by Barry Windsor-Smith – and yes, it now had a creepy, Cthulhu-esque vibe, with strange goings on in sleepy New England towns. Brunner finished off a Stan Lee-written issue Smith had started, but then a new writer came in – DC's Gardner Fox, with a



Frank Brunner took Cosmic to a whole new level.

NO WORD IS SPOKEN! NO SOUND SAVE THE INSPIRE
KRONOS, THE MOST POWERFUL TITAN OF ALL, SHACKLED BY PLANET-LARGE ENERGY
NEARLY SHATTERS THE SPIRIT AND COURAGE OF THESE SIX POWERFUL ADVENTURERS.
IS THE HOPE THAT THERE WOULD BE SOMEONE TO CARRY ON THE FIGHT IF THEY WERE TO
KRONOS... ONCE HE WAS FATHER, CREATOR, GOD, OR AT LEAST A NEARLY OMNIPOTE
DIETY TO MOST OF THESE CRUSADERS! NOW HE STANDS AS THE TOTAL FAILURE OF ALL
WAS BUT NOW HAS FALLEN! THEN...

ENGLEHART AND BRUNNER STARTED TO TAKE SERIOUSLY THE IDEA THAT DOCTOR STRANGE WAS SORCEROR SUPREME

full-script style and a more prosaic take on Doctor Strange as a sort of magical detective – and Brunner flip-flopped over leaving for a while before telling Thomas he'd stay, but that the guy he'd really like to work with was Steve Englehart. He and Englehart had just met, but they'd bonded while talking about *Doctor Strange*. From *Marvel Premiere* #9 onwards, Gardner had been ditched and a new team was on board – and ready to take *Doctor Strange* Cosmic too.

The big Englehart/Brunner storyline revolved around Sise-neg ("Genesis" backwards), a renegade scientist from the far future who was travelling backwards through time, grabbing all the magic for himself, until he arrived at the dawn of time and created the Big Bang, effectively becoming God. Some of it had been inspired by the writer watching the TH White-influenced musical *Camelot*, in which Merlin lives his life backwards; other bits came from Eastern religions, or Aleister Crowley, or Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*, a fictional grimoire, supposedly bound in human skin and kept locked away in the Vatican. It was this that inspired Brunner to suggest making Silver Dagger, a secondary villain, into a renegade Roman Catholic cardinal.

But it wasn't just about the bad guys. Englehart and Brunner started to take seriously the idea that Doctor Strange was Sorceror Supreme too, and were always questioning how seriously they should take it. What did the role really mean? How far could they go? With Strange's Eastern mystic mentor, the Ancient One, dead – at which point he became "a part of everything", of course – their hero had to stand on his own feet, at last. The answer, it became clear, was pretty far...

Soon he'd meet God, Death – even planet Earth itself. (Over the "God" thing, Englehart tried to cover his arse in a sneaky way, faking a letter from a Christian minister praising the storyline, and Marvel, for introducing the Almighty into comics – by many accounts, Stan Lee read it, and it put his mind at rest.)

Trapped in a world he never made

Of course, Cosmic Marvel didn't end there. In time, Brunner would leave *Doctor Strange* to launch *Howard The Duck* with Gerber. "I saw this talking duck character in a *Man-Thing* comic book," he said, "and I realised that was what I wanted to do. After all that seriousness I wanted to do something funny."

Funny, but at the same time Cosmic as well, for *Howard* – for all its outlandishness – had some pretty serious concerns underpinning it, and the sort of introspection that sat so well in the mouths of Adam Warlock and Stephen Strange was a good fit for Howard's bill too.

Man-Thing itself, of course, had more than a few Cosmic moments, and then there was *Killraven*

in *Amazing Adventures* – another lyrical, poetic comic at the edges of Cosmic Marvel – and the equally strange, rather picaresque *Morbius, The Living Vampire* strip in *Adventure Into Fear*. Though *Shang Chi, Master Of Kung Fu* and *Black Panther* in *Jungle Action* weren't Cosmic in any obvious way, they were the products of young creators who ran in the same circles, and the books were kindred spirits nonetheless.

Meanwhile, over in the most mainstream quarters of Marvel, even *The Avengers* (with its prosaic Sal Buscema art but, crucially, Steve Englehart scripts) would see minor heroine Mantis eventually become something called the "Celestial Madonna", learn the history of the universe – and marry a tree. Elements of Cosmic were hitting even the Big Name books, then, and around the edges things were going more than a little strange too...

Before *Star Wars*, *Planet Of The Apes* had been the biggest thing in vertically integrated science fiction properties: it was a movie series, books, a TV show, plus toys and merchandising galore. There were also a number of Marvel comic books, far less heavily controlled and overseen than they would be nowadays, where a counterculture-influenced creator like Doug Moench could go wild. Most *Apes* comics were part of Marvel's black-and-white magazine line, and here writer Moench collaborated with artists like Mike Ploog, Tom Sutton and Alfredo Alcala to produce lush, moody, dark and petrifying comics, packed with Apes but leaving the film universe behind to become increasingly weird and otherworldly.

Soon we had human-ape hybrids, giant talking brains, inter-species romances, underground Gothic cathedrals and an orangutan King Arthur. One story, "City Of Nomads", boasted giant ape

SOON WE HAD HUMAN-APE HYBRIDS, GIANT TALKING BRAINS, INTER-SPECIES ROMANCES, UNDERGROUND GOTHIC CATHEDRALS AND AN ORANGUTAN KING ARTHUR

city-ships commanded by ape pirates and manned by human slaves, a bizarre sword-and-sorcery take on Apedom that spearheaded a series of stories Moench would call "Future History Chronicles", each stranger and more disturbing than the last. The black and white Marvel magazines were a dying breed, and as Ape fever settled down the comic faded and died – but not before giving us the dark side of Cosmic Marvel.

Of course, as with so much that's great, it all seemed to be over almost as soon as it had begun.

Starlin quit *Warlock* in 1976, over disagreements with Gerry Conway – the latest Marvel editor-in-chief, this one lasting just weeks in the job – over the direction the book should now take. For Starlin and others, it seemed the magic had gone out of these books now that all the powers-that-be were

Cosmic Marvel does apes and octopuses.

getting involved and having opinions. Part of the charm had been that you were working on books that were about to die, so nobody cared; Roy Thomas left you alone, or even encouraged you. But once they started to sell again, the magic and freedom were slowly taken away.

Doctor Strange, too, became a victim of its success – though in more prosaic fashion. Now too popular to remain in *Marvel Premiere*, he'd quickly earned his own bi-monthly book and then, after five issues, that went monthly. It was terrific news for everyone, you might think – except for an artist who can't keep up. Brunner promptly quit, went to *Howard The Duck*, then quit that too.

And now there was an even bigger villain abroad. These characters – no matter how high quality the individual stories – were not big names, and could never survive, as Superman had during all the superhero wilderness years, on brand awareness alone. Marvel's early '70s expansion had run on cheap and easily available paper, but when paper prices started to rise again contraction was inevitable, so it was bye-bye *Killraven* and *Warlock*, farewell *Guardians Of The Galaxy*, and ta-ra to a few more down-to-Earth books like *Black Panther* too. Many had been fan favourites, the most exciting titles Marvel put out – but it couldn't save them in the face of cold economic truths.

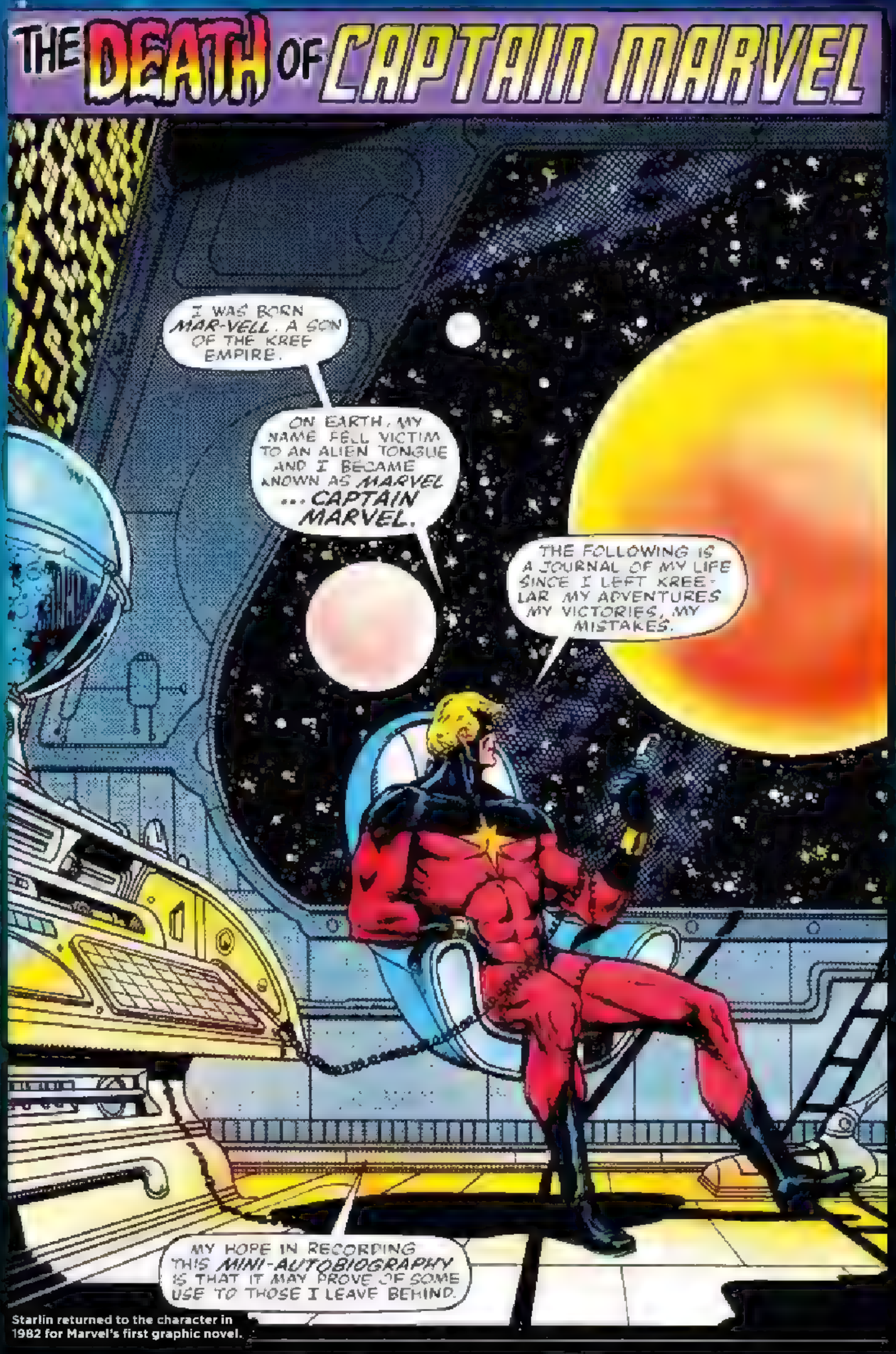
Many mysteries still unplumbed

So, why did it happen? And what was the appeal of it all? Well, for one thing, the new generation of creators had a wider – or, at least, different – frame of reference to the old, and their influences were not hard to see: Moebius and the other *Métal Hurlant* artists; Michael Moorcock; Kirby's DC work on *New Gods* (and particularly #7, "The Pact", which had blown many a mind); and consciousness-expanding chemicals, which we'll get to in a minute...

Then there was the increasingly college age audience they could aim at, a crowd that rarely seemed to reject anything as too weird or too complicated. Great sacks of letters would now come in, discussing philosophy with the *Doctor Strange* team – and few, if any, would complain about the direction these books were taking.

There was the benign neglect of an overworked Roy Thomas, of course, who hired people he liked then let them get on with it. If you can turn it in on time and make it sell, he'd say, you can keep doing it; otherwise, we'll fire you and get someone who can.

Not to be discounted, too, was the fact that Marvel was, slowly but surely, becoming a writer – not an artist – led company. Artists had often made the running in the past – the most exciting new creators who'd come through in the five years before "Cosmic Marvel" had all been


THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN MARVEL
I WAS BORN MAR-VELL, A SON OF THE KREE EMPIRE.
ON EARTH, MY NAME FELL VICTIM TO AN ALIEN TONGUE AND I BECAME KNOWN AS MARVEL ... CAPTAIN MARVEL.
THE FOLLOWING IS A JOURNAL OF MY LIFE SINCE I LEFT KREE-LAR. MY ADVENTURES MY VICTORIES, MY MISTAKES.
MY HOPE IN RECORDING THIS MINI-AUTOBIOGRAPHY IS THAT IT MAY PROVE OF SOME USE TO THOSE I LEAVE BEHIND.
Starlin returned to the character in 1982 for Marvel's first graphic novel.

artists, like Barry Windsor-Smith, Neal Adams, Jim Steranko – and, in many ways, they still ruled the roost at DC. But the Marvel of the '70s was one of the first comic book companies to become more revered for its stories than for its pictures. For all his qualities, nobody rushed out to read, say, a Sal Buscema comic – but when Sal was teamed with Steve Englehart (albeit still working in a version of "Marvel style") on *Avengers*, and the pair produced fascinating and unpredictable stories... Well, that was something else entirely.

And there was more. The industry, too, had loosened up. The Comics Code had been revised and, anyway, they tended to leave you alone when you concentrated on the Cosmic. After all, though these comics were pushing plenty of boundaries, Cosmic had never relied on sex or violence for its effect – and many of the Cosmic characters had never been your regular punch-out-the-bank-robber superheroes anyway. (It was arguable, for instance, whether Doctor Strange was even a superhero at all. While other superheroes engaged in physical battle, Stephen Strange fought for our souls.)

And then, of course, there was the big thing: how Cosmic fitted in with its creators' lifestyles. Many of these young guys had got in the habit of walking around the streets of New York in the early hours of the morning together, semi-lost and fascinated by the creepy shapes of the buildings and their shadows at night. It was on trips like this that Jim Starlin, Steve Englehart and Frank Brunner would come up with story ideas for an epic *Master Of Kung Fu* fight scene, say; another time, a similar walk would generate the classic Sise-neg storyline from *Doctor Strange* or the godlike transformation of Thanos in *Captain Marvel*. Silver Dagger's base, in an abandoned subway station, was another element inspired by these walks.

There were drugs involved, of course.

Back in the '60s, Steve Ditko would take offence at all the letters coming into early Marvel saying, "What are you guys smoking over there?" – and particularly the ones that referenced Ditko's ever-more-surreal *Doctor Strange*, with its trippy visuals, astral projection and all that. Fact was – and despite the obvious otherworldly, Cosmic vibe to his stuff – he wasn't smoking anything. But that didn't stop his work seeming perfect for those mind-expanding times, whether he liked the fact or not.

Now, however, a great deal had changed.

"Oh yes," said Steve Englehart once, when asked about his generation's chemical intake, "and it's not even really a secret." They'd have dinner together, smoke a joint or take some acid, then try to work out what to do next – maybe on one of those walks around the city. "Yeah, we got cosmic," said Englehart, "but I still went back and made sure I didn't lose it all in the haze."

Frank Brunner agreed: "Important observation: drawing on LSD does not work, but it can give a person some wild ideas!" (Not everyone, however, was into it. Like Ditko a decade earlier, Steve Gerber would have little or no truck with chemical enhancement.)

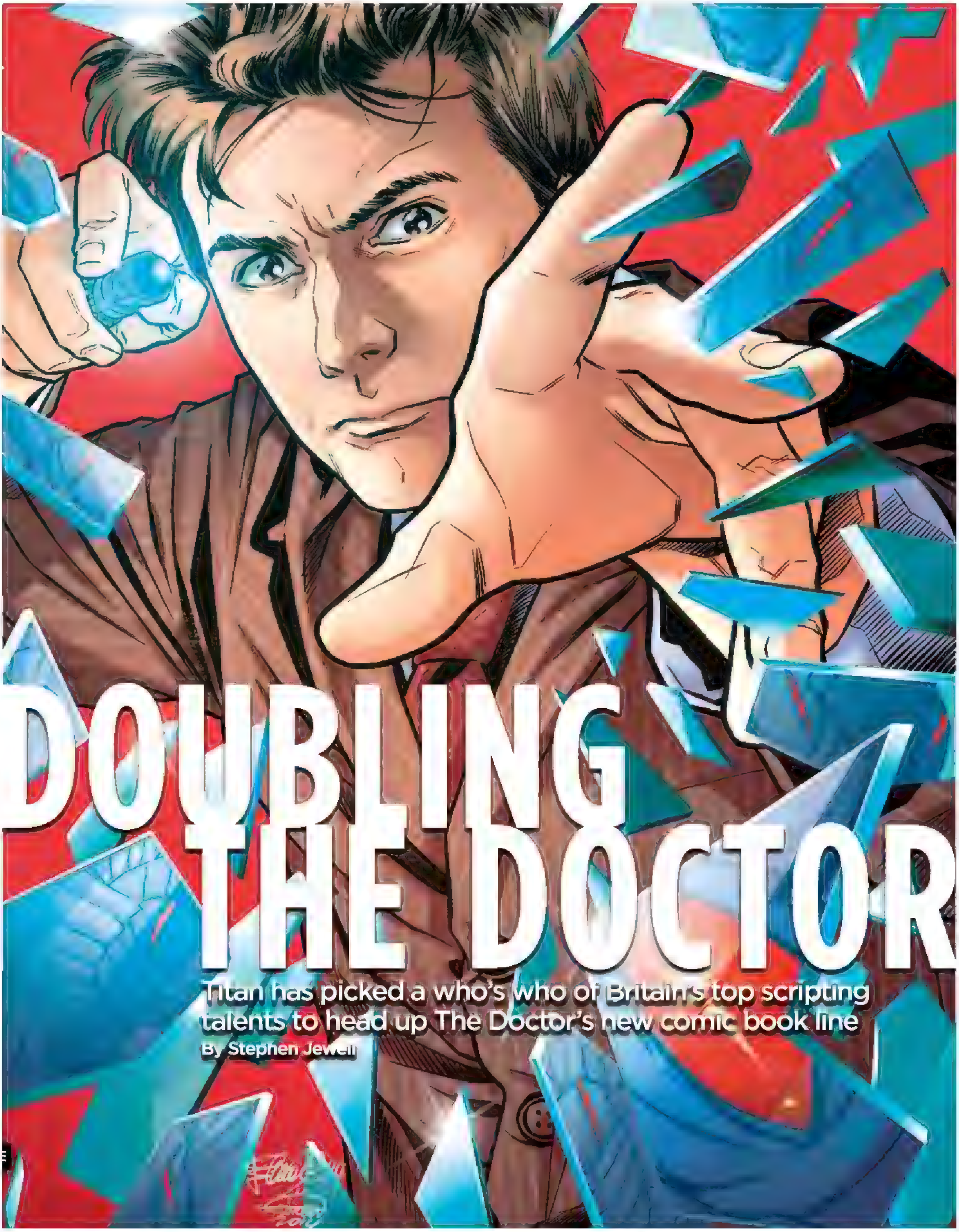
Later, around 1973-74, Englehart, Starlin, Brunner and others would all move out to California's Bay Area. Many of them were still working for Marvel at that point, but they now had direct contact with California's underground comix scene too. When the writer of *The Avengers* is hanging out with people like Gilbert Shelton of *Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* fame... well, it's going to impact on what Marvel does, at least a little bit.

Rising of the Spirit

So, what's the legacy of Cosmic Marvel? Well, some thrilling and inventive comics. Plenty of characters and situations that still dominate many of today's big blockbuster storylines. A certain level of ambition, and a willingness to explore interesting side-avenues, that's inspiring. And another reminder that often the best thing an editor can do is get the sharpest, most hungry talent on a book – and then get out of their way.

Back in 1973, at the peak of Cosmic Marvel, two of its biggest guns – Steve Englehart and Jim Starlin – had worked together on the launch of one of the company's least science fiction-influenced strips: *Shang-Chi, Master Of Kung Fu*. As our hero – the hitherto unheard-of son of old pulp villain Fu Manchu – needed a name, Englehart started going through the *I Ching*, putting together hexagrams until they sounded good.

What he came up with was a name that meant "the rising and advancing of the spirit" – and it was perfect. *Shang-Chi* wasn't Cosmic in any normal sense, but his name summed up what all Marvel's most exciting heroes were doing at the time. Sometimes, and for all the qualities of modern comics, it feels like a little bit more of that now wouldn't go amiss... CH

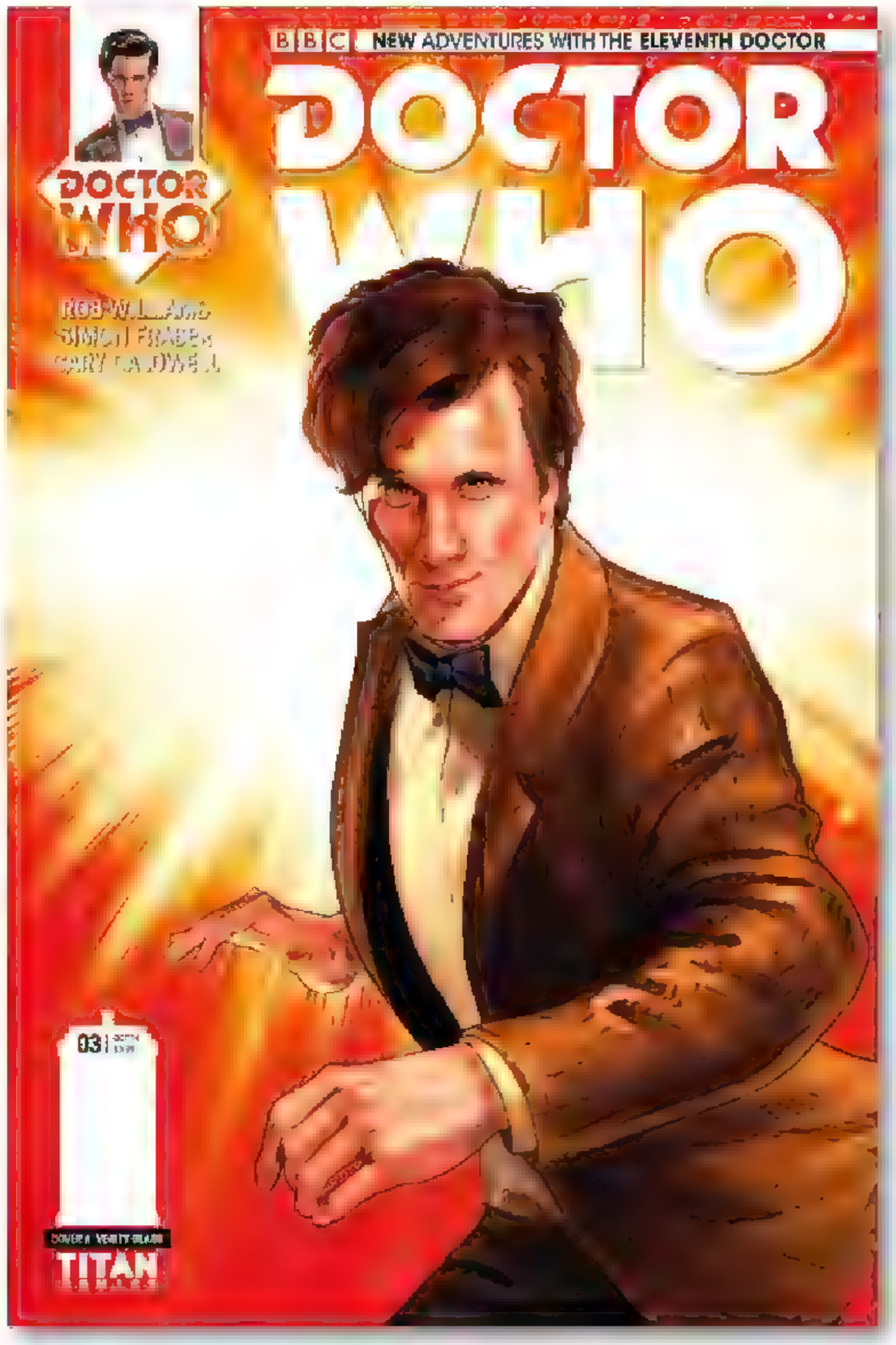


DOUBLING THE DOCTOR

Titan has picked a who's who of Britain's top scripting talents to head up The Doctor's new comic book line

By Stephen Jewell

BBC NEW ADVENTURES WITH THE TENTH DOCTOR
DOCTOR WHO
DOCTOR WHO
All Titan's #1s come with a beautiful regular cover, plus five other variants.
04
TITAN



All images © Titan Comics

As anyone who enjoyed *The Day Of The Doctor* knows, the only thing better than the Doctor is multiple Doctors. That's certainly the approach of Titan Comics, which has won the rights from IDW to produce *Doctor Who* comic books for the American market. Later this month, the London-based publisher will launch not one but two new monthlies, centred around the adventures of David Tennant's Tenth Doctor and Matt Smith's Eleventh Doctor.

"Starting out with two ongoing series is just our way of showing how seriously we take the responsibility that comes with this licence," explains Titan editor Andrew James, "and also how we'll be rising to the challenge!"

Dubbed "the editorial Rassilon of Titan's *Doctor Who* comics line", James has selected some of the best of British writing talent to helm the two titles. Nick Abadzis and Robbie Morrison are taking charge of *The Tenth Doctor* while Al Ewing and Rob Williams will join forces on *The Eleventh*.

"It was a case of looking for people who were humming with imagination and who could come up with sympathetic takes on each Doctor, as well as creating fascinating comics companions," says James. "Characters who could more than stand up to their TV counterparts."

Abadzis – known for his *Deadline* strip *Hugo Tate* and graphic novels such as *Laika* – actually approached Titan on the off-chance after hearing whispers about its *Who* comics coup. "Fortunately, they seemed to think I was a good fit," he recalls, admitting that he was happy to be paired with David Tennant's more gregarious Time Lord. "I really enjoyed his performance on TV, in fact my whole family did. My nine-year-old daughter is still in love with him – although that doesn't stop her brandishing Eleven's sonic screwdriver in my face whenever she gets the chance.

"Starting out with two ongoing series is just our way of showing how seriously we take the licence"

"Although I'm known for the grit and drama of my reality-based work, I'm also known for my ability to make comic strip characters emote and to wring similar feelings from the reader. I tend to think of myself as a fantastical kind of storyteller, but I can't help grounding characters in realistic emotional responses, which is a good way of approaching the romanticism of the Tenth Doctor."

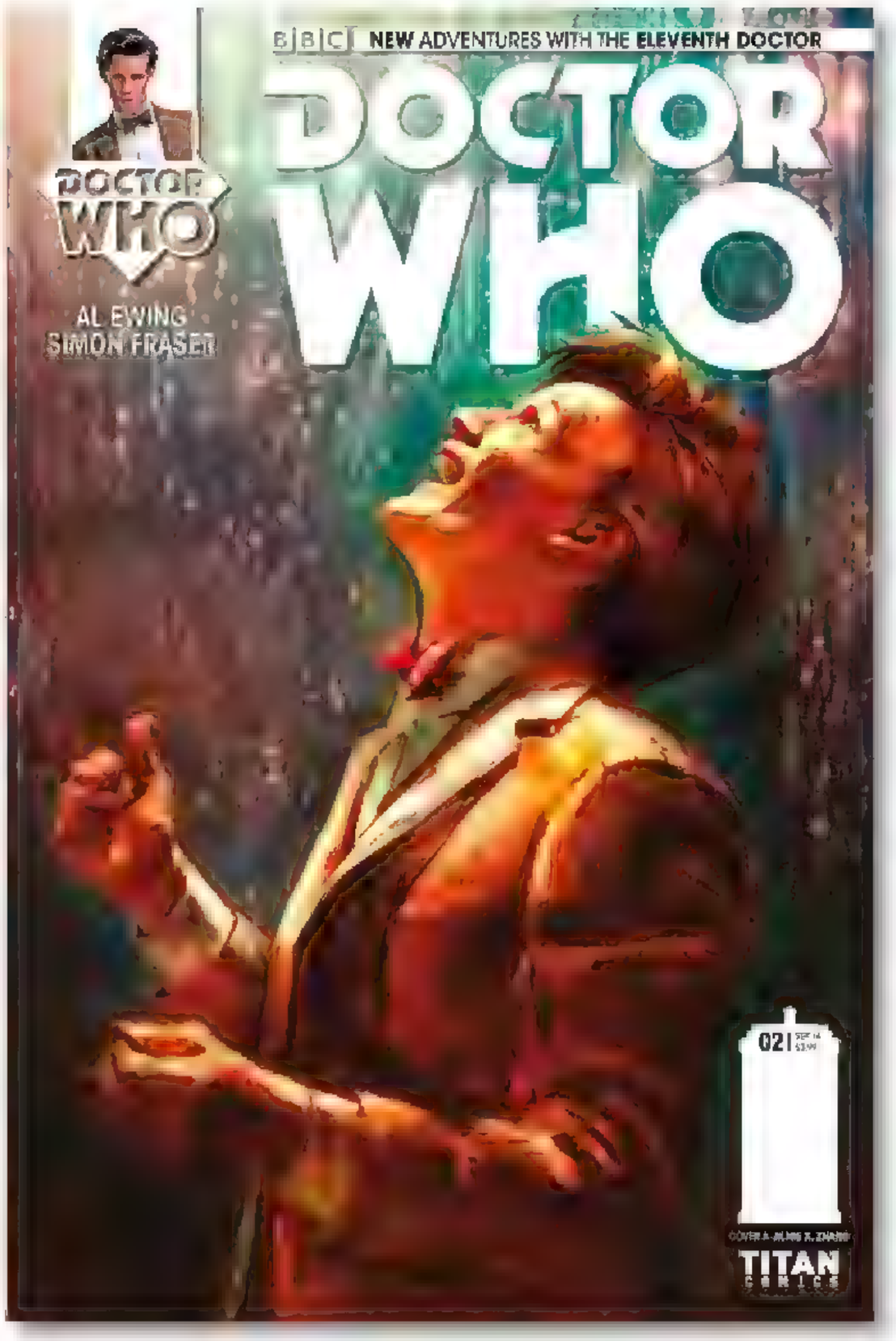
After Abadzis's opening five-part arc, Robbie Morrison (*Nicolai Dante, Drowntown*) takes over for a three-issue run, starting with #6. Hailing from the same Scottish region as David Tennant, taking on his Time Lord represents a homecoming of sorts for the *2000 AD* stalwart. "Tennant is also from Paisley, which is a stone's throw from where I grew up," he says. "Like Nick, I'd have been happy to write pretty much any of the Doctors but Tennant's Doctor is probably the most human – as such – that we've seen. He's warmer, more compassionate and even romantic on occasions, which some of his predecessors would probably have frowned upon. That makes him easy to relate to.

"In the past, his human companions were sometimes like an emotional conduit to colder, sterner, more 'alien' Doctors. Tennant gave the Doctor a certain swashbuckling panache, which is very appealing."

COSMIC TRICKSTER

The pair tasked with writing *The Eleventh Doctor*, Rob Williams (*The Royals, Ordinary*) and Al Ewing (*Mighty Avengers, Loki: Agent Of Asgard*), are long-time friends and previously collaborated on *2000 AD*'s 2012 crossover *Trifecta*.

While Williams would have been "thrilled either way", Ewing's preference was for Smith over Tennant. "Between Ten and Eleven, Eleven is my favourite," he says. "Partly that's because Eleven seems more capable of making mistakes and is more fallible and vulnerable. Tennant's Doctor seemed very caught up in his own mythology; he was like the lonely god or the oncoming storm… »



Matt Smith was more of a cosmic trickster, which appealed to me."

The pair co-operated closely on every aspect of the book. "We both decided what the general arc should be, and we're both making sure things progress as intended," explains Ewing. "The process differs a little depending on whether we're actually co-writing – as in #1 – or writing an individual issue. For the first issue, we each wrote 11 pages and then batted it back and forth, making changes until it seemed right. For the next two issues, one of us wrote the whole thing and the other offered notes, more like the *Trifecta* model. That's probably how we'll do most of them, but there are a couple of short arcs – double episodes, in the style of the TV show – that'll be co-written, and I imagine we'll decide how to handle those when we get there.

"We came up with the over-arching plot for the year between us and then there were individual issue slots where it was either an Al issue or a Rob issue, and it was up to us individually to pitch a story," adds Williams. "We both seem to be coming from a similar place as to where we want the book to go. Al's a fab writer and a mate, so that makes it easier. There's been no butting heads thus far."

In contrast, Abadzis and Morrison show each other their scripts but are otherwise working in isolation. "We're liaising," says Abadzis. "It turns out that I'm writing more issues of this year's arc than Robbie, so I suppose I'll be more responsible for the overall shape of it, but I'm really happy to be working with him.

"Nick's like the perfect *Doctor Who* writer, so it's great to bounce ideas back and forth with him," adds Morrison. "At the risk of sounding high-falutin', I've always seen Nick as a sort of magical realist when it comes to storytelling; he's capable of fantastic and surreal flights of quirkiness and imagination, which are always grounded in a certain reality that make his stories more believable and affecting. If that's not a description of *Doctor Who*, I don't know what is!"

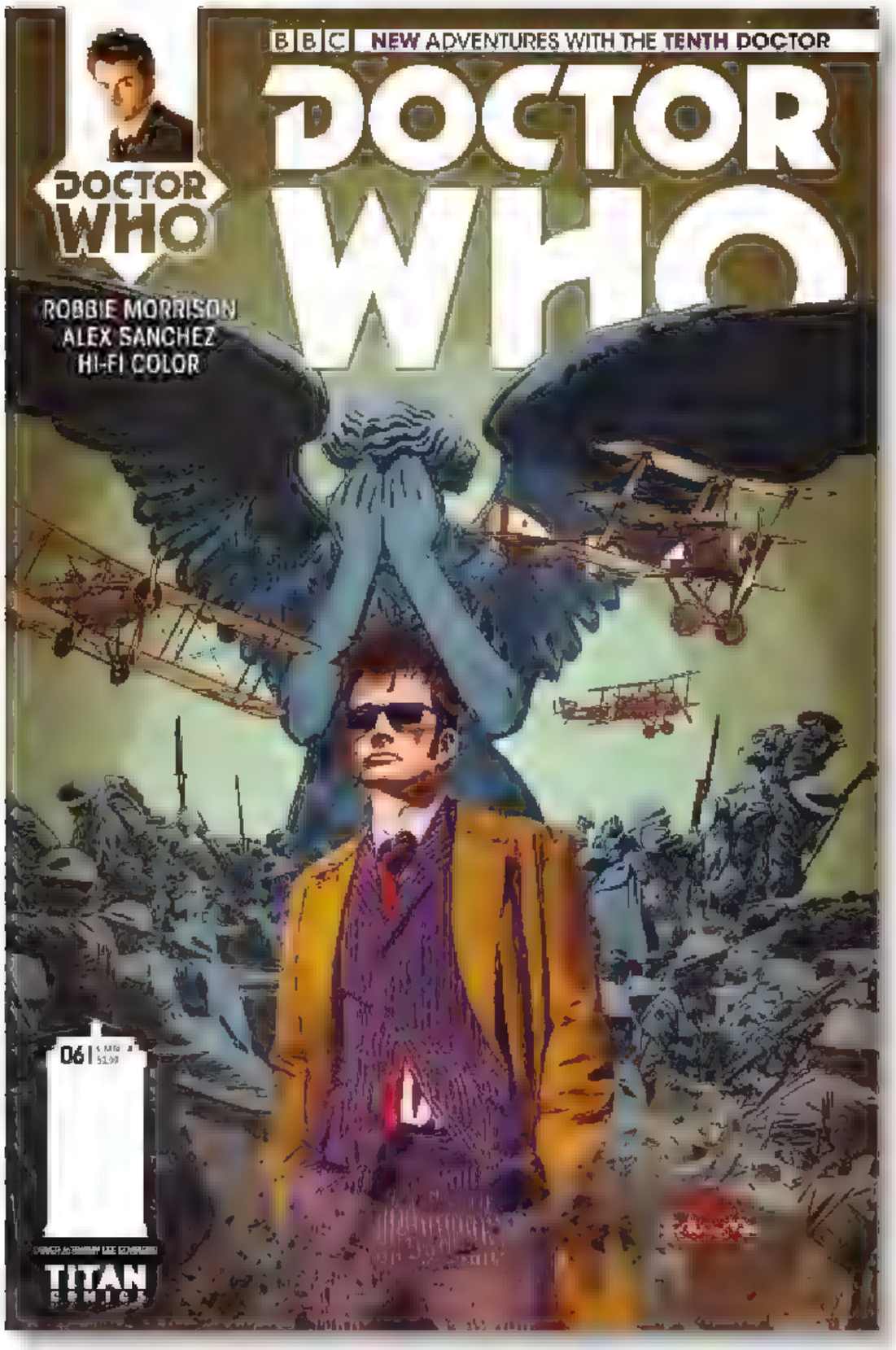
Abadzis is currently based in New York and, when it came to creating Gabby Gonzalez, the Tenth Doctor's new companion, he took inspiration from his local neighbourhood. "She's a Mexican-American from Sunset Park in Brooklyn, which is where I live," he explains, "and her roots are very much a part of her character. Like all *Doctor Who* companions though, she isn't simply the girl or bloke next door: she's got that extra something and a deep curiosity about life.

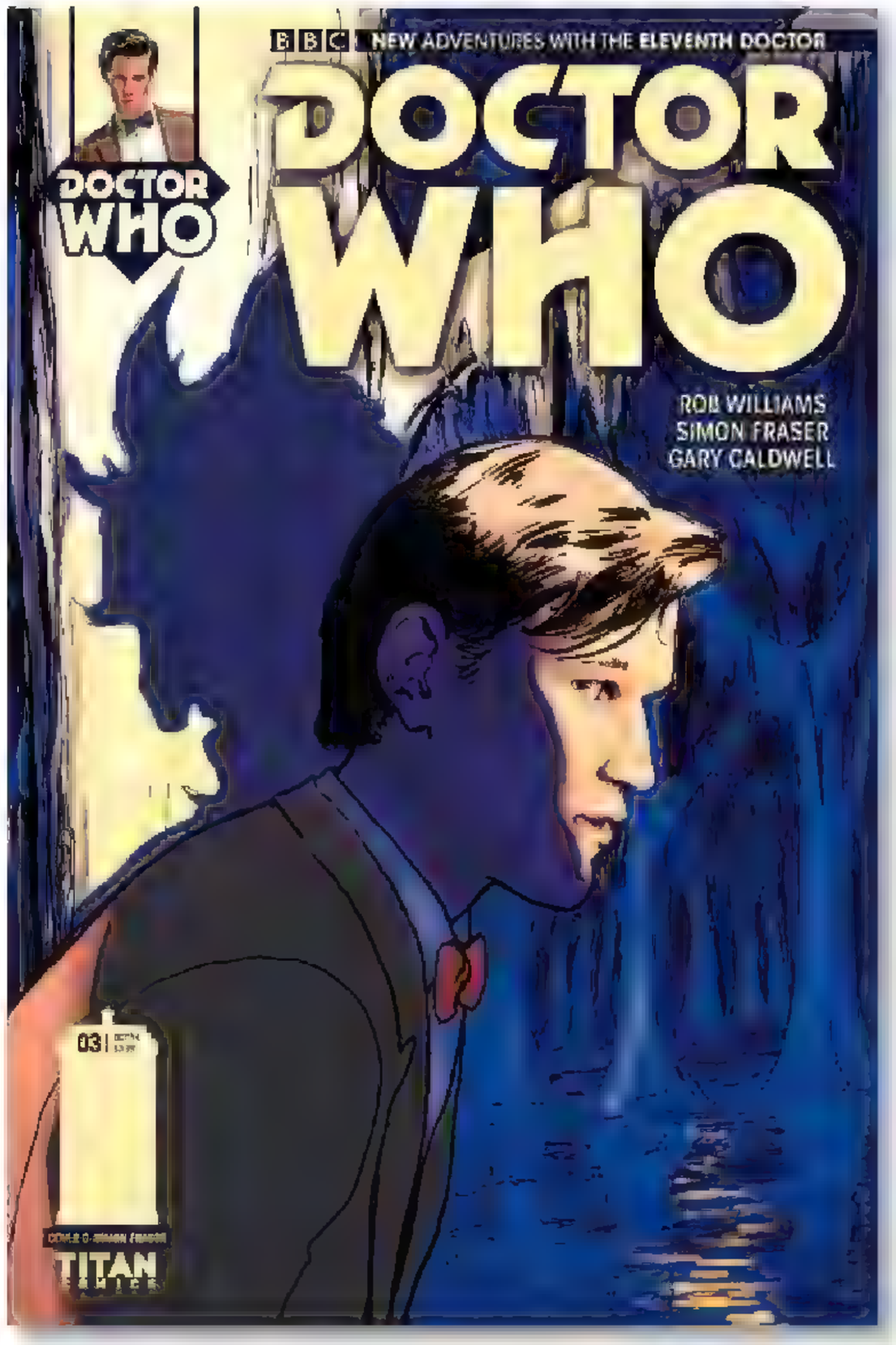
"To a certain extent, she's caught between two cultures: her own desires and those of her parents. She yearns for a larger world but, until she meets the Doctor, her horizons are circumscribed by family expectations and tradition. She sees the Doctor as a mentor, a friend and a confidante, with knowledge of the world – and the universe – that will allow her to live more fully. She thinks of herself as utterly unremarkable, but the Doctor can't help but encourage her adventurous qualities and curiosity. She does grow to love him but not in quite the same romantic way as Rose and Martha."

Abadzis named the laundromat assistant after real-life Latino cartoonist, Gabrielle Gamboa. "She's a friend of mine who happens to be a massive *Doctor Who* fan," he says. "I was also interested in how the Tenth Doctor, and the Ninth before him, had a very domestic aspect to some of their adventures, and it seemed worthwhile continuing that tradition at the beginning of the new comics run."

The events of *The Tenth Doctor* are set towards the end of David Tennant's tenure and just after Donna Noble's poignant departure, so having a brand new foil allows Abadzis and Morrison to take the Doctor into previously unexplored territory. "Rose, Martha and Donna's stories have largely been told and while I love those companions,

“Like all companions, Gabby isn’t simply the girl or bloke next door: she’s got that extra something”





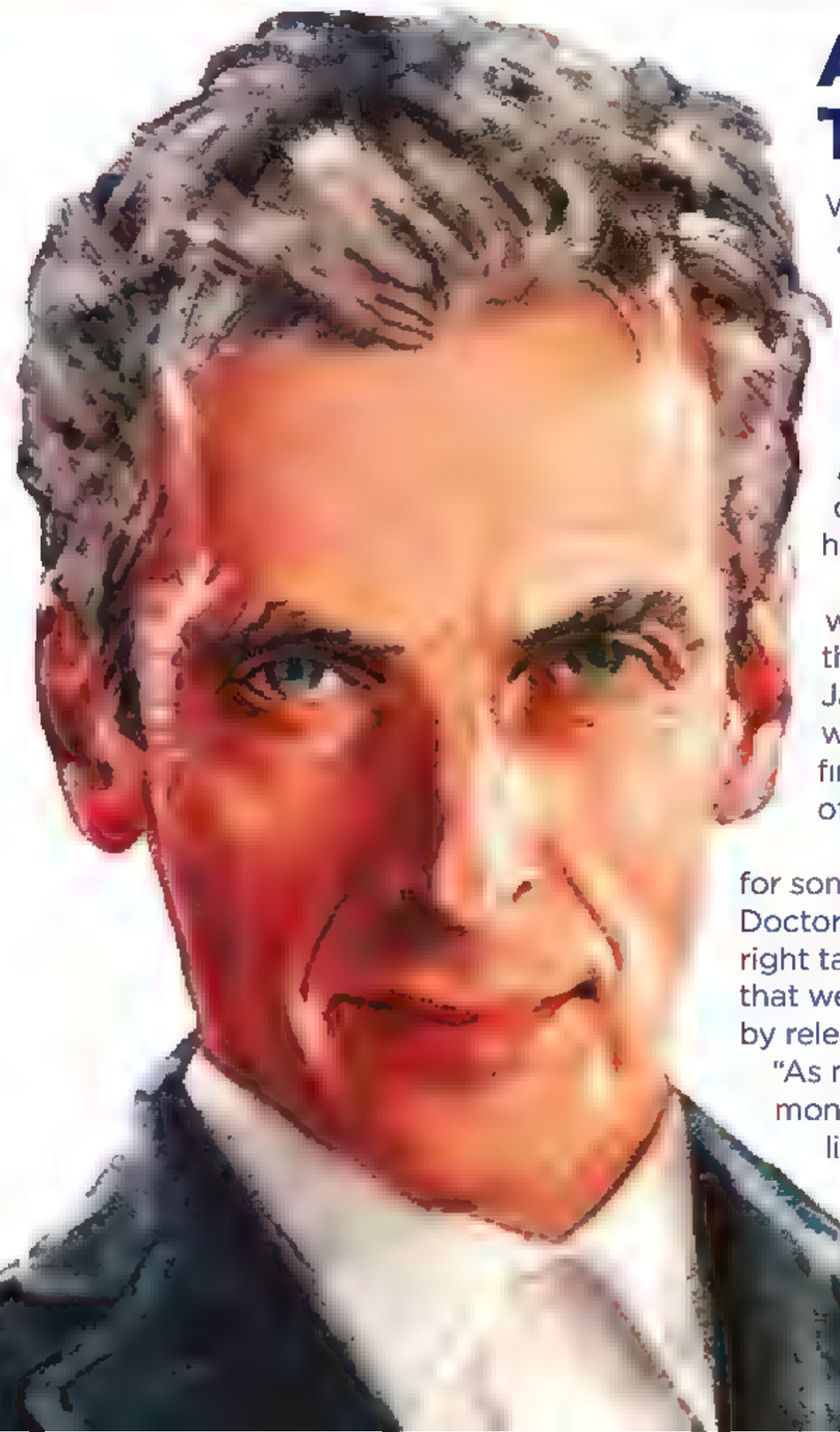
having Gaby on board gives us a new dynamic," he says. "She's a different kind of personality for him to bounce off and that will allow us to reveal some new facets of him as well."

Abadzis is also full of praise for how artist Elena Casagrande has brought Gabby to life. "Watching her create Gabby's physical appearance from my character descriptions has been a joy and she's also amazing at capturing David Tennant's expressions," says Abadzis. "Comics are a visual medium, so you add little details in the script, but Elena takes those and extrapolates whole new angles to a character. I'm an artist myself, so I know the rigours of that end of comics all too well. I never ask her to draw anything I wouldn't have a go at myself, but she consistently confounds and exceeds my expectations."

LONDON CALLING

While she hails from London like many of his recent TV assistants, the Eleventh Doctor's new comic book companion, Alice Obiefune, also brings some very different qualities to the table. "She's an ex-library assistant in her late thirties, who's been having a very rough time of it," explains Ewing. "Her mother dies, which leaves a massive hole in her life, but she's also lost her job and is facing eviction. When we first see her, she's almost overwhelmed with grief; the Doctor offers her both support and a chance to escape from that."

Alice is also aware of the Doctor's numerous flaws. "That's one of the advantages of having a companion who would be older than Matt

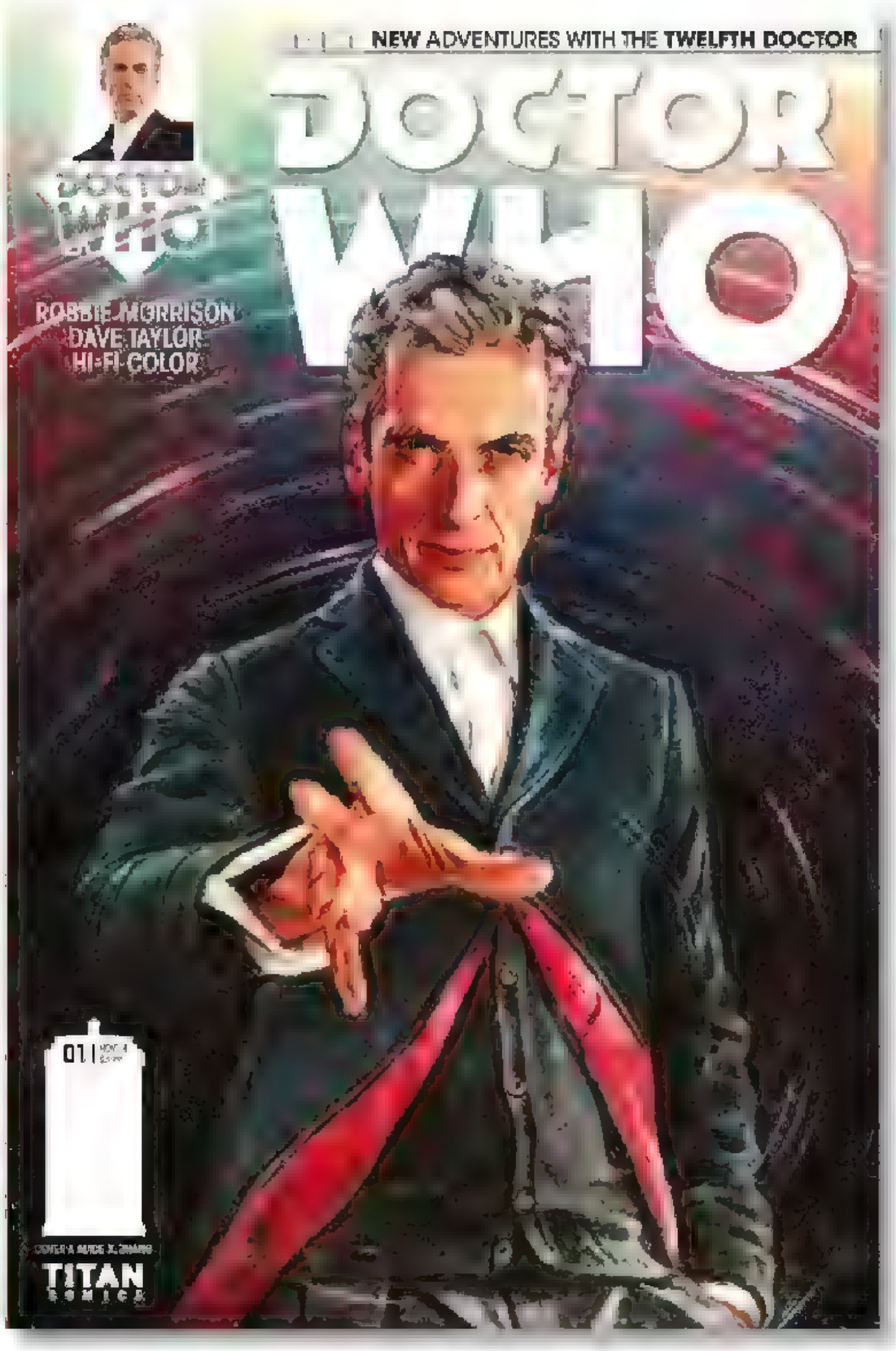


And Then There Were 12...

With Peter Capaldi poised to make his debut as the latest embodiment of the last Time Lord in August, Titan will be wasting no time, adding *The Twelfth Doctor* to their stable in October. Written by *The Tenth Doctor*'s Robbie Morrison and drawn by Dave Taylor, few details are currently available, although two of #1's five variant covers reveal that Clara will also be making her presence felt.

"2014 is Peter Capaldi's year, so everyone wants to give him the time and space to make the mantle his own," says editor Andrew James. "But since everyone will fall in love with his Doctor within about 10 minutes of the first episode, I'm sure it won't be long before other Doctors appear in our line-up!"

In fact, James reveals that Titan has plans for some other miniseries featuring several of The Doctor's past incarnations. "The trick is finding the right talent to match each Doctor, and to make sure that we're not overwhelming readers and retailers by releasing everything at once," he explains. "As much as we'd love to have an ongoing monthly set in each era, we want to expand the line while still letting completest fans pick up every issue – it's always a delicate balancing act."



Smith – it changes the dynamic a little," reasons Ewing. "Alice isn't so ready to follow the Doctor unquestioningly, or put up with all his nonsense. She's willing to tell him off if he needs it – and sometimes he does need it – but I think their relationship will be all the stronger for that."

"There's a moment in the third issue where the Doctor tells Alice that it's refreshing for him to travel with someone his own age, which, rightly, she takes offence to because she's not 900!" laughs Williams, hinting that a couple of additional travellers will also be coming along for the ride. "Coming up with our own companions gives us more creative freedom and poses a real dramatic threat. If we do our job right, you'll care about these people and, given what the Doctor does, they may not make it out alive."

The Eleventh Doctor begins just after the climax of Matt Smith's first season, which saw the Doctor rebooting the universe after the Big Bang. Williams and Ewing will fill in the gaps of what happened to the Doctor in Amy and Rory's temporary absence. "There'll be new villains," teases Williams, "and we'll be showing off some new worlds. There's also the return of a major figure in the Doctor's life, although you'll have to read it to see who that is."

"We're keeping everything relatively new, so we've got new monsters, a new Big Bad or two and new aliens, but there are also occasional references and Easter eggs, so hardcore fans needn't feel left out," adds Ewing.

Ewing heaps praise on *Eleventh Doctor* artist Simon Fraser, who has designed some striking otherworldly creatures. "Simon's a big *Who* fan, so he's come onto the book with a real energy about him. He's got a fantastic imagination when it comes to creating some of the weird beasties we'll be meeting and the alien in the first issue is beautifully realised. He's also very good at world building, and his likeness of the Doctor is really fun – it captures that chameleon sense of the character, who seems like this slapstick god but, when he turns, there's this huge gravitas."

“Everything's relatively new so we've got new monsters, a new Big Bad or two and new aliens”

IN THE WARS

The Tenth Doctor will also meet some famous adversaries during Morrison's inaugural storyline. "For the most part, we're leaning towards creating new characters and concepts but certain monsters are very hard to resist and my first story sees the Doctor being stalked by a particularly scary old foe," says Morrison, who reveals that his three-parter with *The Evil Within* artist Alex Sanchez is set during the First World War.

"It takes the Doctor and Gabby to one of the darkest periods of human history – though also one that's quite timely – to face an enemy so terrifying that I'm actually a wee bit scared to start writing it!"

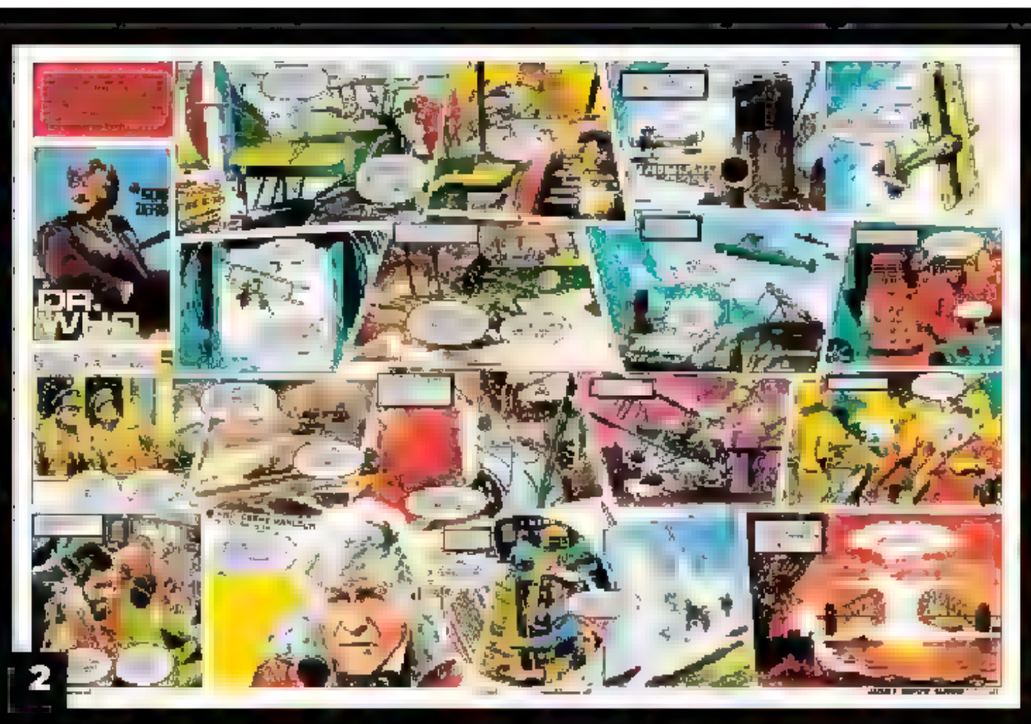
Morrison and Abadzis are on *The Tenth Doctor* for the duration but Ewing and Williams have mapped out 12 months' worth of tales – actually 15 issues – and will see where they go from there. "Towards the end, we'll see how we're doing and decide if we want to bow out," says Ewing.

While all four are looking forward to reading each other's respective books, both camps are currently following their own creative paths. "We're keeping ourselves to ourselves and dealing with our own themes," says Ewing. "In future, we might stretch out a little but first we have to prove ourselves as a completely separate entity."

"At this point, if there's any thematic overlap, it's probably accidental," adds Abadzis. "But who knows? Maybe there are already some patterns in both stories that will grow together like a pair of Krynoid pods, germinating and initiating a great vegetable rebellion on a planet of soup-makers." CH

*The new **Doctor Who: The Tenth Doctor** and **Doctor Who: The Eleventh Doctor** series hit comic stores on July 23.*

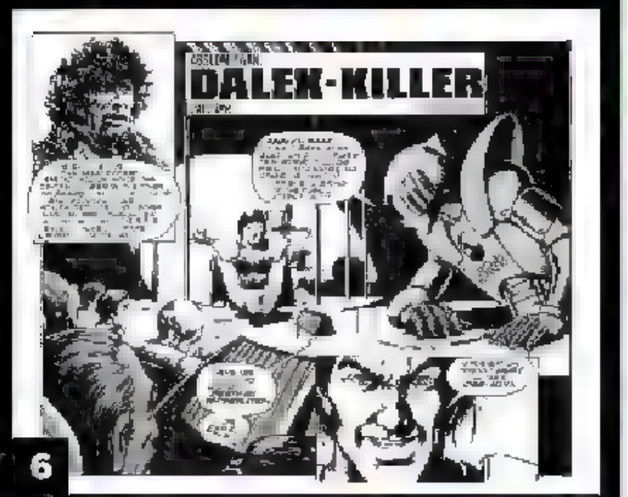
1



2

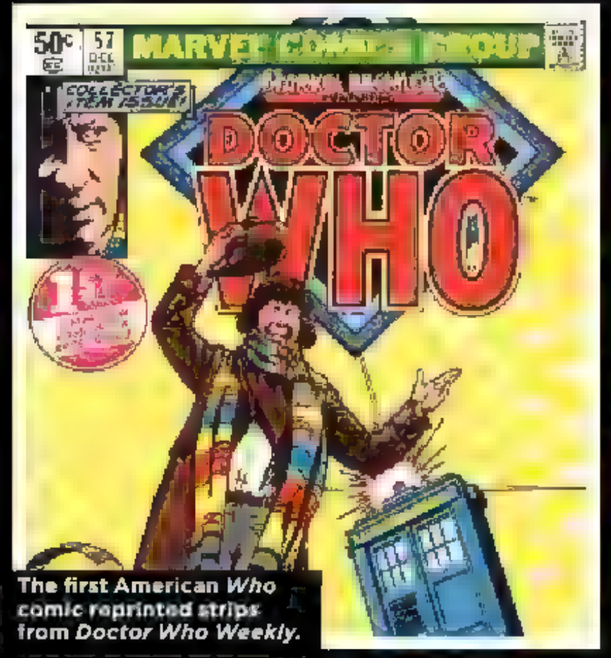
4

Alan Moore's *Doctor Who* comic, *Star Death*.



6

5



The first American *Who* comic reprinted strips from *Doctor Who Weekly*.

3

The Girl Who Loved Doctor Who by Paul Cornell.

Doctor Who Comics History

After last year's spectacular celebrations, The Doctor marks another half-century anniversary later this year. It will be 50 years this November since the very first *Doctor Who* serial was published in *TV Comic* [1].

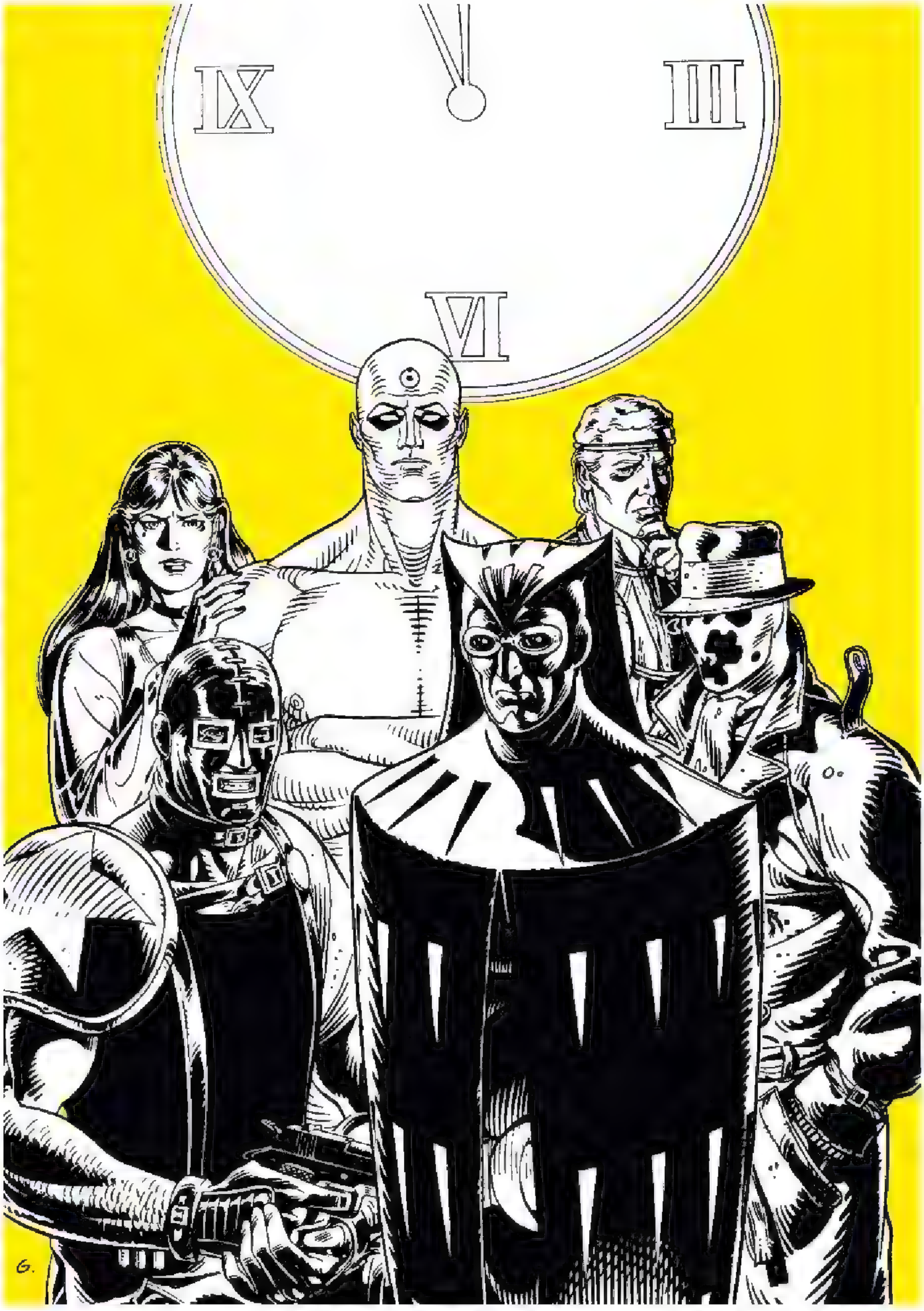
Graduating to the Gerry Anderson-themed *Countdown* [2] and then *TV Action* in the early 1970s, the first two decades saw numerous, often-uncredited writers and artists chronicling the adventures of The Doctor's first three incarnations. "I can recall the *TV Comic* strip drawn by John Channing, which was very trad and very '70s but also very charming," says Nick Abadzis while Robbie Morrison remembers "my granddad buying me *Countdown* and *TV Action*, which was beautifully drawn by Gerry Haylock."

Who's comic book heyday arguably begins in 1979 with the arrival of Marvel UK's *Doctor Who Weekly*, which promptly shifted to monthly status the following year before becoming the *Doctor Who Magazine* [3] in 1984. Kicking off with Pat Mills, John Wagner and Dave Gibbons's classic "Iron Legion" [4], a host of leading British writers and artists including Steve Parkhouse, Mike McMahon [5], John Ridgway and Grant Morrison would grace its pages over the next decade. "I remember *Doctor Who Magazine* with fondness," says Al Ewing. "My brother started getting it around the time they were doing some fairly strange stories involving the Fifth Doctor and a man with a featureless black ball for a head. Aside from that, my main memory of Who in comics is the first episode of *Absolom Daak* [6], which was thrill-powered enough that in another universe it would have fitted perfectly with *2000 AD*."

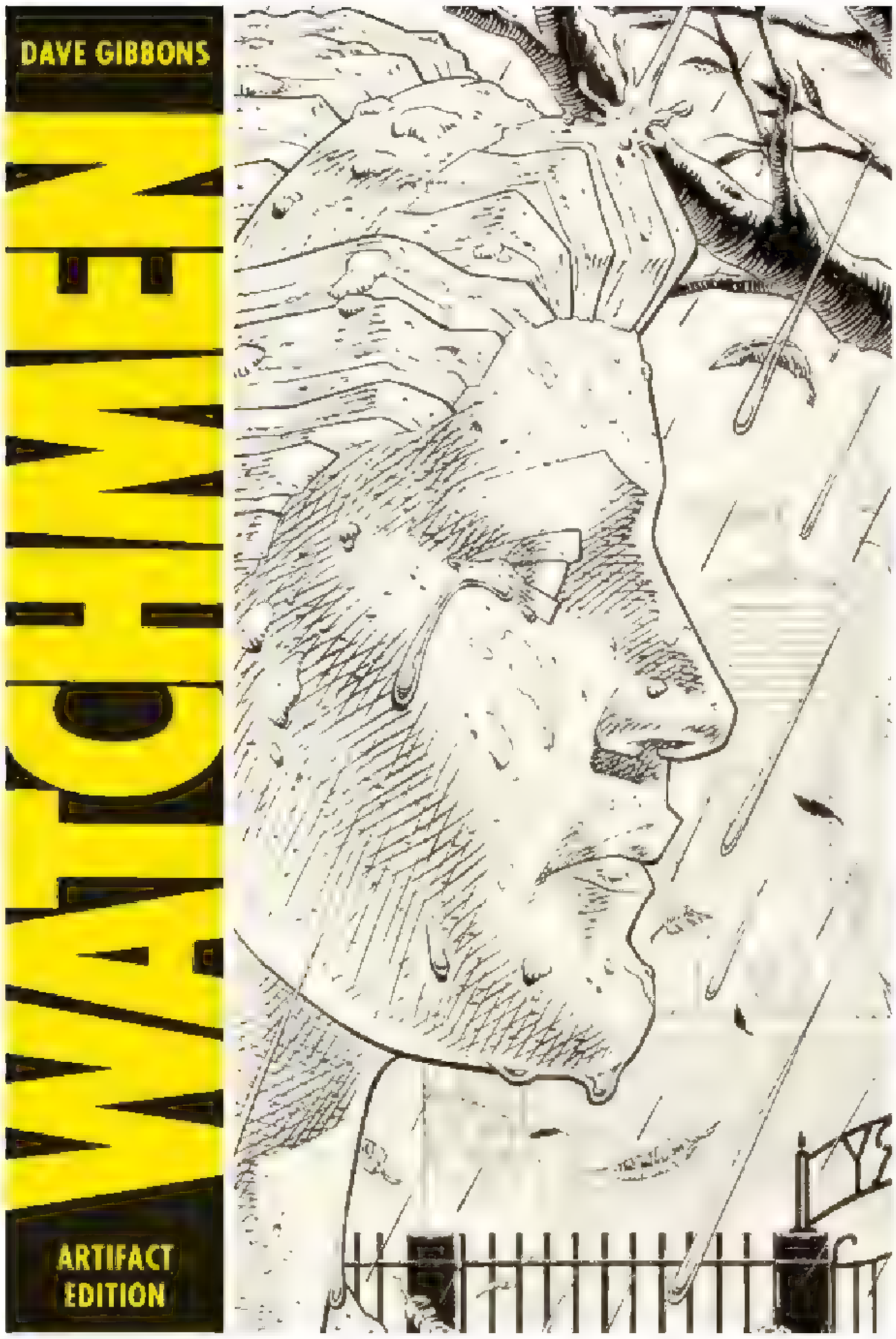
First appearing in 1980, in *Doctor Who Weekly* #17, the fearsome Dalek Killer was written by the late Steve Moore and drawn by Steve Dillon. "It felt so violent, which was important to a teenage reader," adds Williams. "He had a chainsaw! He was so un-*Who* like – more like *2000 AD* meets *Doctor Who*."

After the TV show's cancellation in 1989, comic strips continued to be included in *Doctor Who Magazine* during the Time Lord's '90s wilderness years. Under the guidance of writers like Scott Gray and Jonathan Morris, they remain an integral part of the Panini publication to this day. Following Russell T Davies's highly successful reinvention of the Time Lord, IDW was granted the first international *Doctor Who* comic book licence in 2008. Available online but not in UK comic shops – at least not officially – due to licensing issues, the firm's various *Who* books featured the work of numerous British writers and artists such as Tony Lee, Andy Diggle, Mark Buckingham and Al Davison, as well as Americans such as Scott and David Tipton, who penned last year's *Prisoners Of Time*.

WHO PENCILS THE WATCHMEN?



As IDW launches its *Watchmen: Artifact Edition*, Dave Gibbons tells **Stephen Jewell** why selling his original art has cost him a fortune



THE OTHERS ARE ALL WAITING TO
YOU VICIOUS LITTLE BITCH
HEY, WAIT! SHE WANTED ME TO DO IT, SUE
NNNAH
YOU SICK LITTLE BASTARD, I'M GOING TO BREAK YOUR NECK...
UUUGGH
:UUHH
:AHUHH:
THIS IS WHAT YOU LIKE HUH?
THIS IS WHAT GETS YOU HOT.
GET OUT
AHUHH "HUHHH" OH, SURE SURE I'M GOING BUT I GOT YOUR NUMBER, SEE? AND ONE OF THESE DAYS, THE JOKE'S GONNA BE ON YOU
GET OUT!

Rough and (left) finished art for popular fanzine *Amazing Heroes*.

If Dave Gibbons could turn back the years, you have to wonder if he would do things differently. Three decades ago, after wrapping up work on *Watchmen* – his now classic series with Alan Moore – he opted to sell all of his original pages to a leading London comics retailer. Meaning that he has not only missed out on a potential small fortune but made things more difficult for IDW when it elected to make the 1986 maxi-series the focus of its inaugural Artifact Edition.

"When you get to my age, there's a few things that you regret," admits Gibbons, who turned 65 this year. "At the time, it seemed like a really good idea. To my mind, the sort of art that people want to buy is what you call 'the money shots', which are the costumes and characters in action. We've not got a lot of that in *Watchmen*, as quite a lot of it is people standing around talking. They're in costume a bit but there's very few 'Gosh! Wow!' because we deliberately kept it quite small key."

According to Gibbons, he was made an offer he couldn't refuse by Paul Hudson, the owner of the now-defunct Comics Showcase. "He offered to buy the lot and I thought, 'Let's just sell it because it takes all of the hassle out of it'. So I gave him the artwork and cashed the cheque. At the time, I got a fair and reasonable price but, of course, now prices have escalated by at least 10 times – if not 20, 30 or even more."

Gibbons estimates that it would cost you about $1m if you wanted to purchase all of the original pages, so *Watchmen: The Artifact Edition* represents the next best alternative, despite its hefty £100 price tag. "Unlike some of IDW's Artist's Editions, such as John Byrne's *Fantastic Four* and John Romita's *Spider-Man*, we haven't got any complete stories in there because the artwork has been scattered to the four winds," says Gibbons. "So we wanted to make it clear that it was fragments of stories and other things including colour pages, sketches and other bits and pieces."

Designed to closely replicate the experience of viewing the original art, IDW's Artist's Editions have become renowned for their meticulous detail.

Printed on paper similar to the particular illustrator's choice of art board, the oversized, black-and-white pages are scanned in colour so that every blue pencil line and all other alterations and corrections are faithfully reproduced. "I really love what IDW have done with the Artist's Editions and I've got a huge section of them on my bookshelf," says Gibbons. "When I first broke into comics in the mid '70s, it was by doing balloon lettering for IPC Magazines. Every week they'd send me a big bundle of original artwork for me to stick balloons on and I loved that. It was how I learnt to do comics, looking at what other artists had done. And because original artwork is much bigger, there's always much more to see, as it tightens up and loses much of the detail when it's reduced and has colour put on it. So if you're a fan of art or you want to be an artist, the Artist's Editions are a wonderful resource."

While IDW has forged relationships with Marvel and DC which have enabled it to release Artist's Editions of such landmark works as Walt Simonson's *Thor*, David Mazzachelli's *Born Again* and Jack Kirby's *New Gods*, a similar treatment for *Watchmen* at first appeared to be a step too far.

"I've known Scott Dunbier, who puts the Artist's Editions together for IDW, for a long time and he actually worked on the *Watchmen: Absolute Edition* with me when he was at DC," says Gibbons. "We were having breakfast at San Diego one year and I said, 'Wouldn't it be cool to do an Artist's Edition of *Watchmen*?' and Scott said, 'Yeah, it would be but DC probably wouldn't let it happen.' Anyway, I spoke to (DC executive editor) Dan DiDio and persuaded him that it would be a good idea, so they let IDW do this Artifact Edition."

With Gibbons owning so little of the original *Watchmen* artwork, an intensive worldwide search was launched to track down all of the pages, which number over 300 in total. "I've got a few sketches and some other things like one of (colourist) John Higgins's painted covers for the series," he says. "Nowadays I take a scan of any art that I do and indeed most art that I do now is actually emailed or uploaded so you have to scan it. All I've got of the *Watchmen* are photocopies that I had done at the time, which are of varying quality so they're not particularly sharp. So I do have a record of the black-and-white art but I don't have good scans. This is the first time that it's really come together and maybe if more good scans come out of the woodwork after seeing the book, we might be able to do an updated edition. But I think it's unlikely that we'll ever get a complete *Watchmen Artist's Edition*."

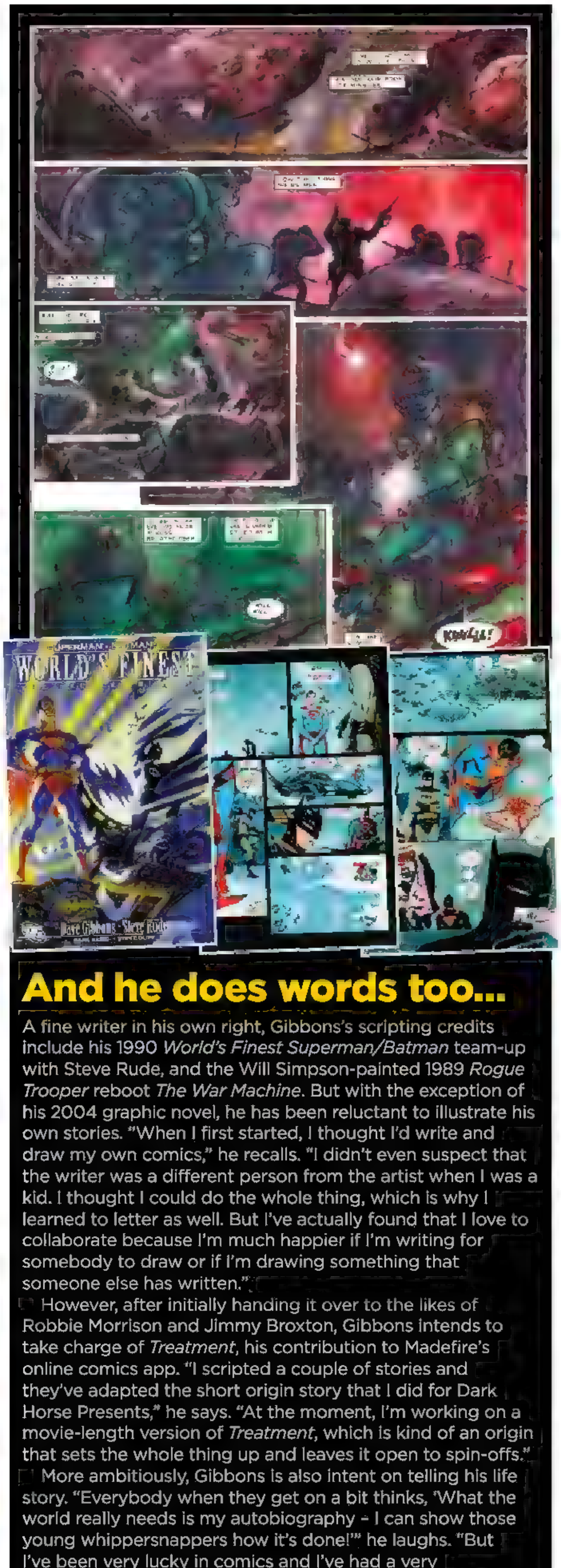
"Looking at what other artists had done is how I learned to do comics"

Watchmen's revolutionary premise has resulted in a sometimes disproportionate amount of attention being afforded to Alan Moore's undeniably influential script. Now with the *Artifact Edition*, Gibbons's art has finally been given the chance to shine. "Alan has always been very careful to attribute *Watchmen* to both of us," says Gibbons. "Comics are a collaborative effort and you can't start pulling it apart to see who did this or that. Obviously, Alan came up with an amazing story originally and I then did my stuff on it. But unfortunately, the mainstream press, who don't understand comics, tend to see the author as being the creator and not just the person who wrote the story. That really shows their ignorance, although it's starting to change now. In the past there's been a lot of 'Alan Moore's *Watchmen*,' which has never really been a problem for me. But in the early days my family would get very upset about it because they thought that I wasn't getting the credit I deserve. Now the *Artifact Edition* has just my name on it because it's entirely a showcase of my work, albeit based on Alan's wonderful words."

DC has published several collections over the past 30 years – not to mention various tie-ins to 2009's big screen *Watchmen* and 2012's highly controversial *Before Watchmen* prequels – but the Artifact Edition could be the last major addition to the *Watchmen* canon, at least as far as Gibbons is concerned. "We've certainly had some mileage from it," he says. "I've always been quite resistant

Mid-way through *2000 AD*'s first year Gibbons started drawing *Dan Dare*.
THRAXIAN SCUM! SHE HAD MORE COURAGE THAN YOUR WHOLE STINKING ARMY!
FURY BLAZES IN DAN DARE'S BRAIN! A WHITE-HOT SURGE OF ALL-ENVELOPING HATRED...
CLOSED
I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU'D CARE FOR A JELLY-BABY?
NO!
REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE, HUMAN!!!
YOU KILLED THE OLD MAN -- IN COLD BLOOD!
SONAR NOW DETECTS TWO HUMANS LEFT ALIVE++ INFRA-RED VISION REVEALS ONLY ONE++ CHECK DATA+++
GIVE ME THAT GUN!
GET BACK-- OR I FIRE+++
THE DOCTOR'S TWO HEARTS CONFUSE THE ROBOT...
SONAR DETECTS TWO HEART BEATS++INFRA-RED REVEALS ONE HUMAN ++CONCLUSION=IMPOSSIBLE ++MALFUNCTION++ IMPOSSIBLE+++
YES, I KNOW I'M IMPOSSIBLE! NOW HAND OVER THAT GUN!

"The Iron Legion" from issues #1-8 of *Doctor Who Weekly*.



And he does words too...

A fine writer in his own right, Gibbons's scripting credits include his 1990 *World's Finest Superman/Batman* team-up with Steve Rude, and the Will Simpson-painted 1989 *Rogue Trooper* reboot *The War Machine*. But with the exception of his 2004 graphic novel, he has been reluctant to illustrate his own stories. "When I first started, I thought I'd write and draw my own comics," he recalls. "I didn't even suspect that the writer was a different person from the artist when I was a kid. I thought I could do the whole thing, which is why I learned to letter as well. But I've actually found that I love to collaborate because I'm much happier if I'm writing for somebody to draw or if I'm drawing something that someone else has written."

However, after initially handing it over to the likes of Robbie Morrison and Jimmy Broxton, Gibbons intends to take charge of *Treatment*, his contribution to Madefire's online comics app. "I scripted a couple of stories and they've adapted the short origin story that I did for Dark Horse Presents," he says. "At the moment, I'm working on a movie-length version of *Treatment*, which is kind of an origin that sets the whole thing up and leaves it open to spin-offs."

More ambitiously, Gibbons is also intent on telling his life story. "Everybody when they get on a bit thinks, 'What the world really needs is my autobiography – I can show those young whippersnappers how it's done!'" he laughs. "But I've been very lucky in comics and I've had a very interesting career. I've worked with a lot of well-known people and I've been in on the ground floor at a lot of important moments. I feel a bit like Woody Allen's character in *Zelig*... or Forrest Gump."

Harlem Heroes: one of *2000 AD*'s original strips.

DAVE GIBBONS REMEMBERS...
THE FIRST TIME I MET ALAN MOORE!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN ABOUT TWENTY YEARS AGO, AT A SMALL COMIC CONVENTION IN SOUTH LONDON.
I WAS QUITE WELL KNOWN AS A COMIC ARTIST, HAVING WORKED ON 2000AD AND DR WHO.
I WAS SIGNING COMICS AND DRAWING SKETCHES WHEN WRITER STEVE MOORE INTRODUCED ME TO HIS TALL, THIN, LUXURIANTLY TONSURED COMPANION.
THIS IS ALAN MOORE. NO RELATION.
I SHOOK ALAN BY THE HAND BUT WAS TOO BUSY BEING MILDLY FAMOUS TO TALK. I NOTED HIM MENTALLY AS "STEVE MOORE'S WEIRD FRIEND. NO RELATION"
SINCE THEN, OF COURSE, WE'VE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER QUITE WELL.
WE'VE CREATED SOME COMIC BOOKS TOGETHER, TALKED FOR HOURS ON THE PHONE, TRAVELLED THE LENGTH OF THE BRITISH ISLES, FLOWN THE ATLANTIC, EATEN MANY A MEAL, AND DRUNK MANY A BEER AND CUP OF TEA ...
I ♥ NY
WE'VE BEEN ON PANELS, GIVEN INTERVIEWS, HAD OUR PHOTOGRAPHS TAKEN, COLLECTED AWARDS AND SHARED EACH OTHER'S UPS AND DOWNS.
YES, ALAN AND I HAVE BEEN THROUGH A LOT SINCE THAT DAY TWENTY YEARS AGO WHEN WE FIRST MET. MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED SINCE THEN. BUT ONE THING'S THE SAME...
I STILL THINK OF HIM AS STEVE MOORE'S WEIRD FRIEND.
NO RELATION.

Gibbons's own take on first meeting his *Watchmen* co-creator.

to merchandising. There's been some merchandising done and it's not been bad. Certainly with anything that has had my name on, I've wanted to make sure that it has been of high quality and value and that it has added something rather than diluting or subtracting from what is already there. I think that this does add to it and I don't know what more you could do. But if you'd asked me a few years ago, this present project would have been an impossibility."

EVERCHANGING WHO

However, he is open to the possibility of IDW producing Artist's or Artifact Editions of his other vintage material, including his *Doctor Who* stories. The San Diego company has actually already reprinted a selection of Gibbons's early work in 2012's *Doctor Who: The Dave Gibbons Collection*, which included the John Wagner/Pat Mills-written "The Iron Legion" with which *Doctor Who Weekly* was launched in 1979. At the tail-end of the '70s Gibbons had established himself as a regular artist on *2000 AD*, first on *Harlem Heroes* and then *Dan Dare*, but he was headhunted by then-Marvel UK boss Dez Skinn.

"Dez tried to lure me away and I saw it as a great opportunity to try and work with Pat and John, who had a huge part in *2000 AD* but who I'd never worked with," he recalls. "So I executed a very cunning scheme where I got them for Dez as well. The reason why they were so keen to work on *Doctor Who* was that they'd actually pitched some ideas to the BBC for the TV series but they'd never got anywhere, so they were able to repurpose the stories they'd already done."

Gibbons spent three years on *Doctor Who*, collaborating with first the late Steve Moore and then Steve Parkhouse, before being recruited by DC in 1983. "The thing about *Doctor Who* is that it keeps your interest up because each story is always set somewhere else and has a different cast of characters, so you never get bored of drawing the same thing," he reasons. "Halfway through my run, Peter Davison took over as the Doctor, which was like a whole new challenge. Tom Baker was very easy to draw because he was all curly hair and a big nose. Peter Davison was much more vanilla and quite hard to draw as I didn't have a lot of reference for him. In fact, he was kind enough to let me and a photographer go to the BBC studios to take reference pictures of him pulling faces, and after that I was able to get some really good likenesses."

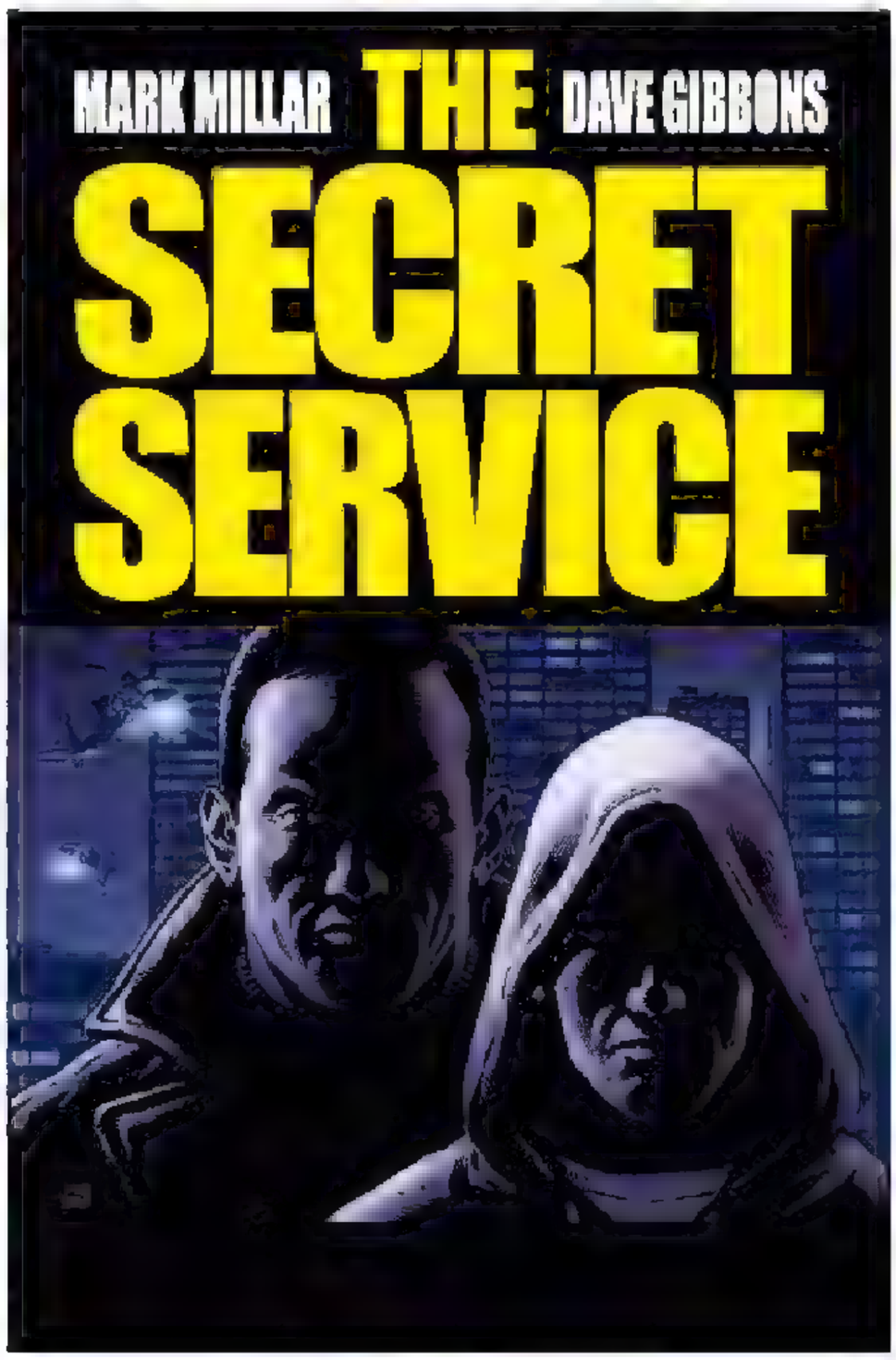
ENTERING MILLARWORLD

Gibbons also had an actor in mind when he was visualising Jack London, the suave spy at the heart of *The Secret Service*, his 2013 Marvel/Icon series with Mark Millar. In

"Tom Baker was easy to draw because he was all curly hair and a big nose"

MISTER HAMILL, I'M HERE ON BEHALF OF THE BRITISH SECRET SERVICE AND I WANT YOU TO KNOW YOU'RE IN VERY GOOD HANDS.
WHAT THE ?
QUICKLY! HEAD FOR THE SNOW-MOBILE.
WHERE IS IT?
JUST FOLLOW THE TRAIL OF BODIES.

The Bond-inspired opening scenes of *The Secret Service*.



reality, though, it's Colin Firth, rather than *Harry Potter* star Jason Isaacs, who's bagged the role in director and co-creator Matthew Vaughn's upcoming movie.

"I saw him as an ex-squaddie, someone who has been smashed about a bit," he reveals. "Of course, there's always a lot of differences between the movie and the comic. The *Watchmen* film was a very faithful adaptation of what Alan and I had done. But with *Secret Service*, it's almost like they're twins. Mark and Matthew came up with the story and then Mark did it in the way that would work best in the comic while Matthew did it in the way that would work best for the movie. At the time I started drawing the comic, nobody was even casting the movie so there was no question of me drawing Colin Firth."

Gibbons has previously collaborated with not just Alan Moore but also Frank Miller on *Martha Washington*, but he ranks Mark Millar up there with the best in the business. "He's got a great sense of story and he's so inventive and imaginative," he says. "You only have to look at the success of the *Avengers* movie, which is basically taken from what he and Bryan Hitch did with *The Ultimates*, to see that he absolutely has his finger on the pulse of modern popular culture. So I knew that I really wanted to work with him and we'd spoken over the years. Then the time became right and he told me about this idea for an espionage story with a completely new twist – kind of like *My Fair Lady*, where somebody from the back streets gets polished into something different."

First volume *Kingsman* concentrates on Gary London, a disaffected South London teenager who is transformed by his long-lost Uncle Jack into a budding master spy. "It was great to draw, with lots of car chases, people getting shot and improbable locales," says Gibbons, who also appreciated the opportunity to draw his hometown of London on such a major scale. "Unlike *Watchmen*, *Secret Service* is set in the real world, so I had to get references of real cars and try to capture what Peckham actually looks like. It was interesting to bring that alive and to transplant everything I love about *James Bond*, *The Man From UNCLE* and the TV *Avengers* into the modern world and contrast it with everyday life."

Millar is busy on his other film and comic book ventures but Gibbons is hopeful that this won't be the last that we see of *The Secret Service*. "It's calling out to be a franchise but it's a question of seeing how things go. What happens next will be dictated by how the movie works out but I've got a feeling that it's going to do really well.

Watchmen: The Artifact Edition *is out now and* ***The Secret Service*** *is in cinemas on October 24.*

ARE YOU READY TO RAGNARÖK AND ROLL?

Walt Simonson talks to **Stephen Jewell** about returning to the Norse apocalypse for his first creator-owned series in decades

All images © Walt Simonson

Although he's best known for his classic '80s run on *The Mighty Thor*, Walt Simonson hasn't put Norse mythology behind him. The hammer-wielding deity that made his name is once again the protagonist in the veteran writer/artist's new creator-owned series. Ah, the wonders of public domain fictional characters.

But the 67-year-old writer/artist insists that the Thor who will appear in the IDW-published *Ragnarök* later this month is radically different to Marvel's superheroic incarnation.

"The Marvel Thor for me was always a mix of mythology and a kind of pulp science fiction," reasons Simonson. "Back in the '60s, when Stan Lee and Jack Kirby first did the book, you had characters like the Tomorrow Man, the Colonizers of Rigel and Ego the Living Planet, so there were a lot of tropes that were borrowed from sci-fi. But there was also always a kind of looking back at the myths as the kind of grounding for those stories, and that's what I tried to do back when I was doing *Thor*."

A fan of Norse mythology from an early age, Simonson believes that it is the universal aspects of the tales that has made them so enduring. "They just have this really human quality about them," he says. "For as much as they are about the gods, there's a deep humanity to the stories. Unlike the Greek gods, they're not paragons of virtue within themselves as they do some pretty terrible things. They're maybe reachable and comprehensible in a way that makes them very accessible to ordinary people."

With *Ragnarök*, Simonson is basing the series firmly on those famous legends, although it will be far from a straight forward re-telling. "Like in the old days with Thor, I'm not trying to do those stories directly because honestly if that's what you're interested in, you can go and buy any one of a gazillion books that are already out there," he says, citing the example of *The Elder Edda* and *The Poetic Edda*, the collections of Scandinavian folk tales that were first written down in Iceland in the 13th century. "I'd like my stories to not be the stories that you could go out and get anywhere. In a way, Norse myths have now become more a part of pop culture and general knowledge, so I've »

Above: Thor with a whiff of zombie about him - Simonson says his look will change as the series progresses

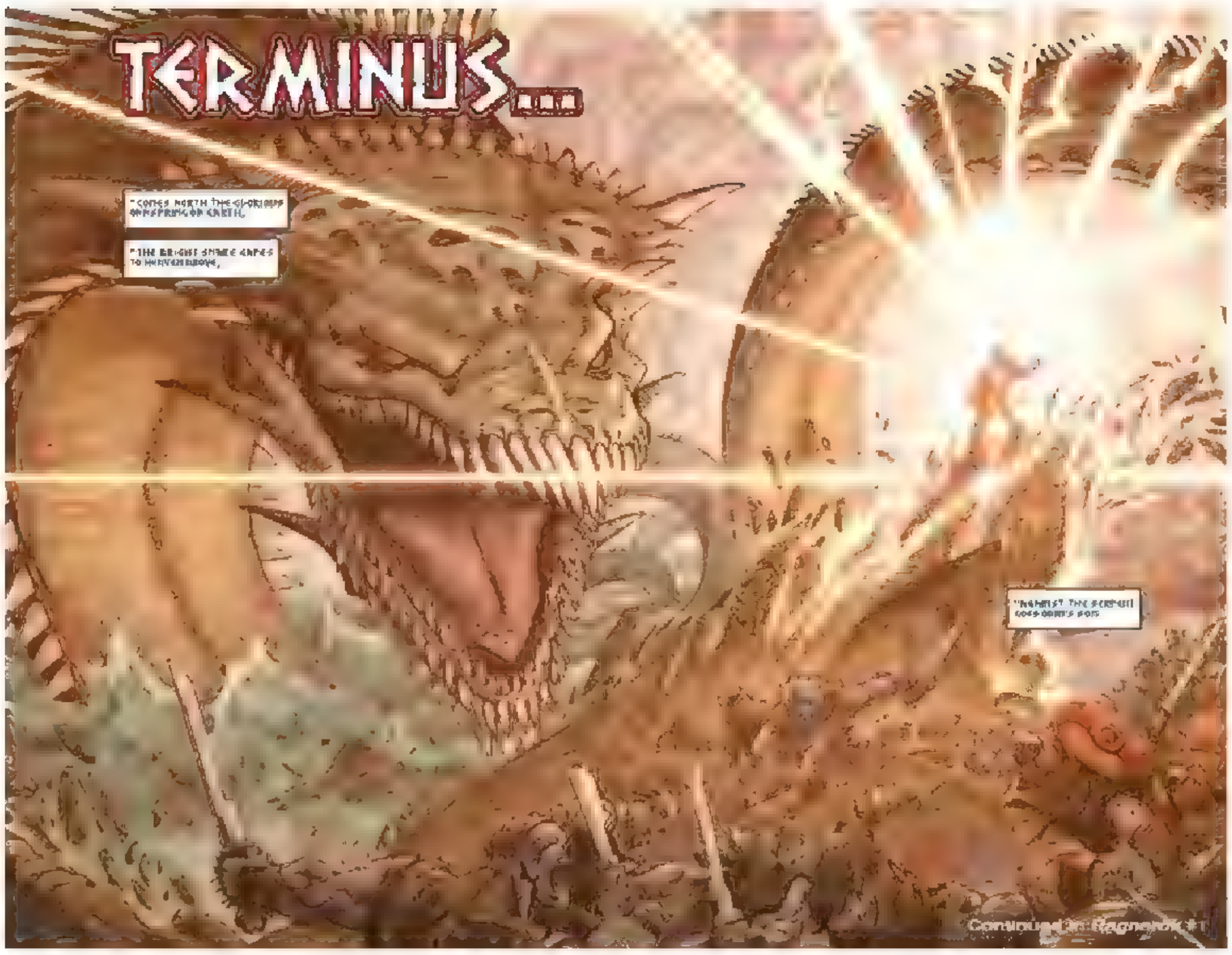
tried to create a land in which the reader won't quite know what I'm doing."

MYTHS & LEGENDS

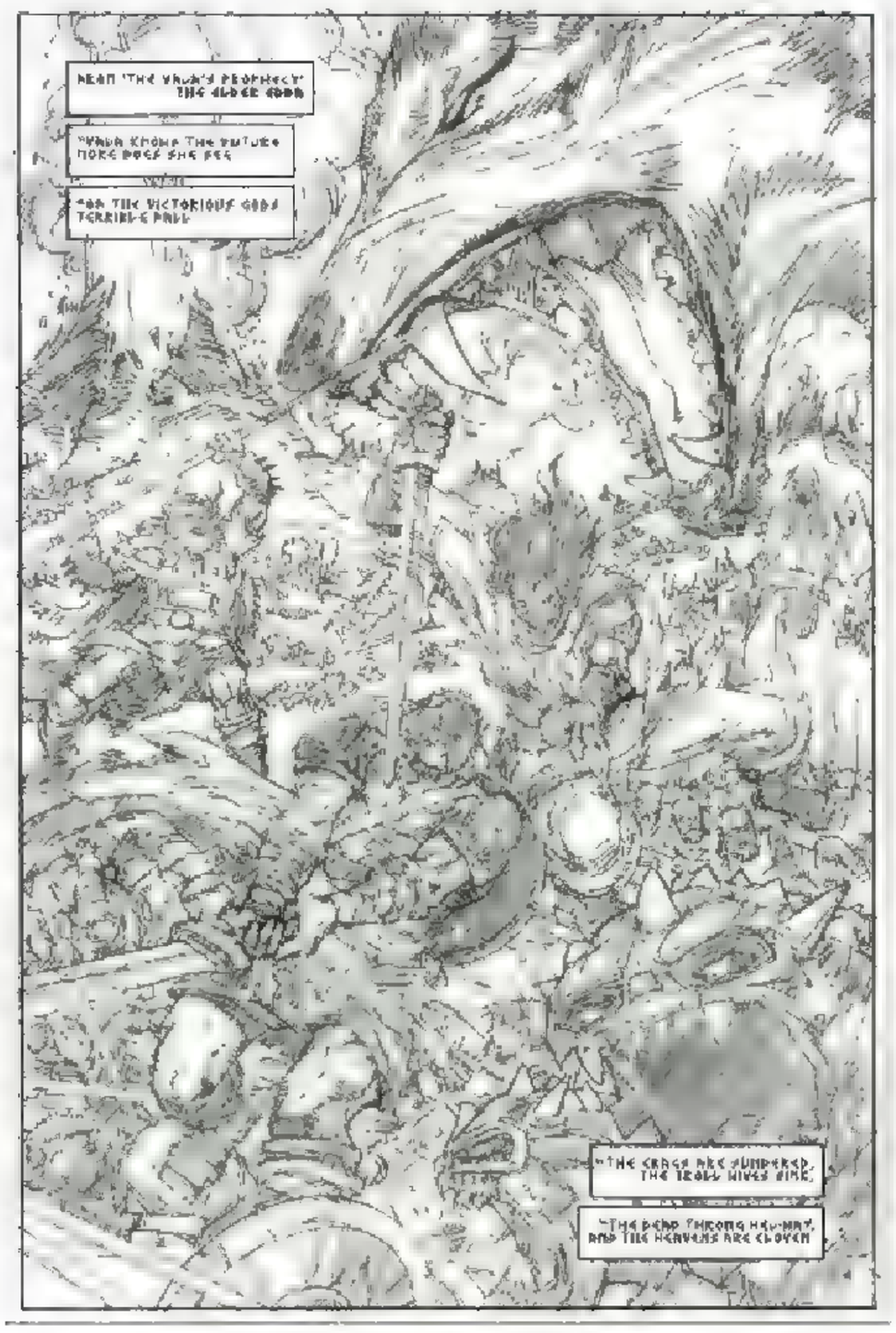
According to Simonson, the current vogue for North European legends can partly be attributed to the creation of Thor, who made his debut in *Journey Into Mystery* #83 in August 1962. "There's always been books about Norse mythology but it's only been in the last bunch of years that it's become more well known in the culture and I credit Stan and Lee for some of that," he says. "And as the comic has gone along, there's been guys like me who have also done their own take on Thor and there's also been other comics on Norse myths."

While Norse myths have become even more popular since 2011's inaugural *Thor* big screen blockbuster, *Ragnarok* has actually been in the pipeline for considerably longer than that. "Scott Dunbier spoke to me about doing a creator-owned Norse-based book of some kind back when he was at Wildstorm," Simonson recalls. "That was about 16 years ago so it's not like this is a new idea. However, the actual ideas in the book are relatively recent. About five years ago, I drew a t-shirt design for a friend that had my own version of Thor on it. That image sparked some new ideas and I began thinking about, 'Who is this particular Thor and what sort of world does he live in?' That was literally the germ for what turned into *Ragnarok*."

Simonson hasn't yet finalised what this new version of Thor will look like yet, though. "At the beginning, he looks a lot like a zombie Thor, although he is not actually a zombie as such," laughs Simonson. "But the way that he looks at the beginning of the story will change over time. It'll be several issues before I really decide whether I like how he looks at the moment or whether he's going to change."



Above: Facing up to the Midgard Serpent: it looks gorgeous.



GODS & MONSTERS

Revealing that he "starts at Ragnarök and then I'm going forward from that point," Simonson plans to literally turn the myths on their heads as the first issue opens long after the so-called Twilight Of The Gods has occurred. "Thor is my main character even though he dies at Ragnarök," he teases. "I'm doing a story where it turns out that the classic story of Ragnarök as you will find in *The Elder Edda* is really a kind of history of the Nine Worlds from the beginning to the end. At Ragnarök, the gods and their enemies go up against each other so that Thor and the Midgard Serpent kill each other, Fenris Wolf kills Odin, and Loki and Heimdall slay each other, so it's basically one for one. My story begins with the idea that as beautiful as that story is – and it's an amazing piece of poetry – it is not quite what happened at Ragnarök. You'll find out that some of the things that we thought were true aren't quite true, and one of them is the fact that not only is Thor not dead but the Midgard Serpent is also not dead, and the enemies of the gods are not dead. However, the gods themselves are all dead, with the exception of Thor."

Expressing admiration for how *Hellboy*'s versatile scenario has allowed Mike Mignola to "do whatever he wanted to do," Simonson intends to adopt a similarly flexible blueprint for *Ragnarok*. "I don't think I have it in me right now to write and draw a monthly book day in/day out for 12 issues a year," he concedes. "That's a lot of work, as I know from experience. So I'm planning to do it as a series of story arcs. So I'll make sure I get well into a story arc before we schedule it so that they come out on time. After it's done, I'll take a month or two off to plan out the next one and get that started, and then when we've got that one in hand we can start publishing that."

Each series of *Ragnarök* will also not necessarily be of the same length. "The first arc will be six issues but I have other arcs that I want to do that are maybe three or four issues," he continues. "I've already done a hell of a lot of writing, whether it's complete plots or rough ideas that can be anything from a sentence to an entire page. And because of the nature of doing creator-owned stuff and IDW's indulgence, what I'd like to do is stories that are as long as they need to be."

Savouring what it is actually a rare venture into creator-owned territory, Simonson is full of praise for his new publishing home. "I've done so little of it over the years, so it's very odd to go back and do it again but it's been a lot of fun," he says. "My editor Scott Dunbier is an old friend from long before he was actually an editor in comics, back from when he was an art dealer. So I'm working with an old pal and for a company that I enjoy working for."

However, he rejects the suggestion that IDW's independent status necessarily results in more artistic freedom. "Thirty years ago when I first started doing mainstream comics with stuff like *Manhunter* with Archie Goodwin at DC, we could pretty much do whatever we wanted with those stories at the time," he reasons. "As long as they kind of fitted within the envelope of mainstream comics, you were able to tell the stories you wanted to tell. But at least from where

Thor as we're more used to seeing him.

“As much as they’re about gods, there’s a deep humanity to the stories”

I'm sitting, mainstream comics have gone in a different direction for creators over the past 10 years, which is kind of more editorially directed. I'm getting to do my own stories at IDW, so it's kind of like going back to the source of how things were 30 years ago, which is the kind of comics I like doing. I'm enjoying it."

However, Simonson returned to Marvel in 2012 for the first time in nearly two decades, collaborating with Brian Michael Bendis on a six-issue run of *Avengers*. "That was a lot of fun as Brian and I are friends and we'd wanted to work together for a long time," he says. "The story was part of a gigantic crossover with *Avengers Vs X-Men*, so it was always hard to know what the heck was going on. Fortunately, my editor Lauren Sankovitch was extremely good at getting me references for the characters that I didn't know, and even the characters I knew had different costumes much of the time. I hadn't drawn for Marvel for almost 20 years at that point, so all of that stuff was different. It was challenging but team books are always challenging because there are so many characters, and in this case Brian tossed in everything but the kitchen sink, just about."

Simonson also teamed up with Mark Waid last year on an *Indestructible Hulk* three-parter, which guest-starred none other than Thor himself. "That was a blast as was the Hulk!" he declares. "Mark persuaded me by saying that we'd do a story set in Jotunheim (the home of the Frost Giants) and I nudged him so that we ended up doing it with the old classic Thor."

While he continues to contribute the occasional cover for other books, Simonson is now focusing solely on *Ragnarök*. "I enjoyed both of those forays at Marvel but I've been wanting to get back to my own writing for some time," he says. "I usually try and jump back and forth, so that I'll periodically do stuff where I'm either writing for another artist or I might be drawing someone else's script. That keeps everything a little fresher for me as there are different challenges involved in each of those situations. I try to not do the same thing all the time because otherwise it gets stale. It's worked out so far and I hadn't written anything for myself for some time, so I thought it was time to get back to that." CH

***Ragnarök** is out this month.*

Star Slammers Redux

Alongside Simonson's latest creator-owned series, *Ragnarök*, IDW is also re-publishing his first creator-owned series, *Star Slammers*, though with a spit-and-polish makeover. Currently IDW is part-way through an eight-part run on *Star Slammers: Remastered* to be followed by both a collection and an Artist's Edition.

Spotlighting a band of crack space mercenaries, the intergalactic opus seems particularly timely, coinciding as it does with the release of the big screen *Guardians Of The Galaxy* and just ahead of *Star War*'s impending return next summer. The core concept actually pre-dates both properties, though – Simonson first came up with *Star Slammers* in 1969. "Back then, I was reading a lot of science fiction as there wasn't much fantasy out there," he recalls.

Serialised in several graphic novels and miniseries from the early '80s to the mid '90s by Epic, Malibu and Dark Horse Comics, *Star Slammers* first saw print in a series of pamphlets created to promote Washington DC's bid to house the 1974 World Science Fiction Convention. "I was already reading a lot of comics by then and was really fascinated by them," he continues. "It was initially called 'Space Slammers' but I changed that at some point to *Star Slammers*, which sounded better. Back then, my drawing style was very cartoony – kind of a weird cross between Robert Crumb and Vaughn Bode because I was a big fan of both those guys."

Simonson then used *Star Slammers* as part of his thesis project at the Rhode Island School of Design. "By the time I graduated in 1972, the second half of the *Slammers* was marginally more professional than the early pages," he says. "So that was the stuff that I put into a portfolio and took to New York to show people to try and break into comics. In the end, DC won the bid for the World Sci-Fi Con and I got into comics, so the *Slammers* worked out very well for me."

OUTCAST
IN HIS OWN IMAGE

As his exorcism tale *Outcast* hits the shelves, the maverick Robert Kirkman tells **Stephen Jewell** why he's possessed by the spirit of independence

Azaceta's terror-laden art is heavy on the thick lines and dark shadows.

Robert Kirkman has a bone to pick with the comic book business. For while this year's cinematic box office has once again been dominated by superheroic blockbusters such as *Captain America: The Winter Soldier* and *X-Men: Days Of Future Past*, the 35-year-old scribe is keen to stress that there's more to the art form than mutants and caped crusaders. And as the fetid brains behind *The Walking Dead* – surely the most successful small screen comics adaptation ever – and the Image series *Outcast*, which is also being turned into a TV series, he should know better than most.

"Any time you can do a non-superhero comic, you're doing the medium of comics a service," he says. "It's very unfortunate that the term 'comic book' goes hand-in-hand with superheroes. The Marvel movies are often referred to as 'comic book movies' and people seem to understand that. But I'm really happy with the fact that *The Walking Dead* is a comic book TV show but it's strictly not a superhero TV show.

"Anything that can be done to separate the term 'comic book' or 'graphic novel' from the term 'superhero' is definitely an important endeavour."

"Anything that can be done to separate the term 'comic book' or 'graphic novel' from the term 'superhero' is definitely an important endeavour. The different kinds of genres that we seem to serve in comics is expanding, or at least non-superhero books seem to be succeeding more regularly. That's great for the industry and I hope it continues."

As one of the five partners of Image Comics and the founder of his own Skybound imprint, Kirkman has also been a key figure in the prominent independent's recent resurgence, which has seen top talents such as Ed Brubaker, Grant Morrison and Mark Millar releasing their own immensely popular creator-owned projects. "I honestly believe that history will show that Image Comics is at the forefront of a revival of the comic book medium as a whole," he says. "The company is definitely »

leading the charge in that we're changing what people's perceptions of comic books actually are. We're also changing our readership into a more representative reflection of the population as a whole as more women are reading Image comics than they are Marvel and DC. That's a great thing as it's helping us to push boundaries and change the medium. It's moving in baby steps right now but in 10 years' time, when you look back you'll see that there were some very interesting and monumental things going on in comics right now and we're very proud to be a part of that."

Kirkman might be keen to prise comic books away from the superhero cliché, but that doesn't mean he's shunned the genre entirely. His long-running monthly, *Invincible*, first published in 2003, centres on Mark Grayson, who assumes the mantle of his extraterrestrial superhuman father, Omni-Man. "It's fun to have a superhero book that has been around for so long as you can then start playing with the continuity in the same kind of way that you would if you were writing a Marvel or a DC book," he reasons. "Despite the fact that I think superhero comics in general are a poison that in many ways is holding our industry back, I still enjoy them as a fan so I like having my own little corner where I can play with that genre."

Drawn by Ryan Ottley and Cliff Rathburn, *Invincible*'s frequently unflinching violence makes for a much more brutal read compared to the all-ages appeal of the majority of Marvel and DC's output. It also attracted considerable controversy after a recent storyline featured Grayson being beaten and raped by one of his female foes. "It's unfortunate when people give out the impression that we're only doing these stories in order to get that reaction, which is never the case," says Kirkman. "You never know what's going to get that sort of reaction, so to try and chase that would be foolish. But I love it whenever people are talking about the book and it's getting noticed. It's an insanely crazy time for the series right now, which means that it's a good jumping-on point."

THE DEVIL WITHIN

Having topped Diamond Distributor's re-order list even before its debut late last month, the word is evidently also out about Kirkman's latest launch. Poised to do for exorcism what *The Walking Dead* has done for zombies, *Outcast* explores – what to some people is – the very real experience of demonic possession.

"This is a guy, in his late twenties/early thirties, who has been dealing with exorcism his entire life," he says of the lead character, Kyle Barnes. "When he was young, his mother was possessed and that has been very traumatic for him and left some very deep scars in his psyche. When we meet him, we see that the burden has never really left him. But he's now come to a point in his life where instead of running away, he wants to try and solve this problem. That's the journey that he's on in the first few issues: trying to see if this is a situation that he can learn more about so that it doesn't occupy every inch of his life. Whether or not he can do that is really the journey of this story."

With a smaller number of protagonists than *The Walking Dead*, *Outcast* takes place in more intimate surrounds, initially at least. "That's just to start off with but as we go deeper, the cast will expand quite a bit," says Kirkman, who admits to being influenced, inevitably, by William Friedkin's classic 1974 film, *The Exorcist*. "There are certainly lots of tropes from other exorcism stories and movies as well as real life cases. But we're actually trying to adopt a more scientific approach. In a way, it's very much an homage to *The Exorcist* and other stories like that but we're also turning that stuff on its head and trying to figure out what makes it tick. We're looking at it from a different angle and trying to see if we can come up with some new elements that will push the genre forward a little bit."

Kirkman will also downplay any theological aspects. "You can't really do an exorcism story without some element of religion so there will be religious scholars and one of the characters is a Baptist reverend," he explains. "But you're not going to see the Vatican or Catholicism portrayed

in any serious way. In fact, this will probably be the least religious exorcism story that people have seen. It's much more of the real world; a more grounded experience with normal, everyday people. These aren't crack exorcists who have been doing it for years or who have manuals that are thousands of years old."

Just as Charlie Adlard is an integral part of *The Walking Dead* team, Kirkman credits artist Paul Azaceta with evocatively capturing the eerie milieu of *Outcast*. "He's really brought out the moodiness of the story," he says. "I've said many times when it comes to *The Walking Dead* that horror seems to work better in mediums other than comics because you don't have motion and sound, which are two big components of horror films and TV shows. But working with Paul, I'm starting to become more keenly aware of the elements of mood and lighting, as well as playing around with the ways in which we can put as much horror as possible onto the page, which is largely down to Paul's contribution."

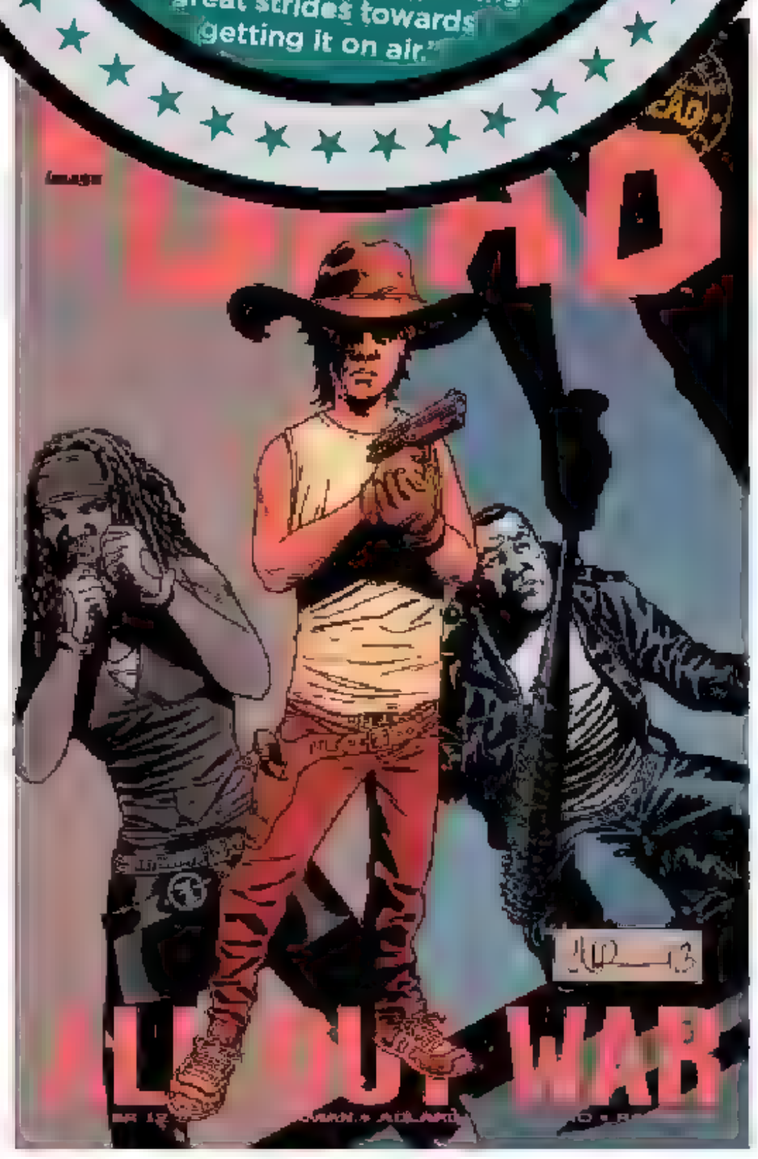
Like *The Walking Dead* before it, *Outcast* has been optioned for television, this time by Cinemax, with Fox International once again picking up the overseas rights. But even though he reports that a pilot is close to being filmed, Kirkman is unsure how soon Kyle Barnes will make the transition to our TV screens. "I hate to use the term 'crapshoot' but you never really know when a television show is going to happen or not. There can be any number of stumbling blocks that can come up, so who knows when we will make it to series."

TO CATCH A THIEF

First optioned by AMC in 2012 shortly after its first issue hit the shelves, Kirkman's high-concept crime series *Thief Of Thieves* is taking a more circuitous route. "As far as the TV show goes, wheels are definitely in motion," says Kirkman. "But this process can be very long or very short and

THE WALKING DEAD'S TV FUTURE

"You might think you know exactly what's coming up but more than likely you're going to be wrong," says Kirkman, when asked if season five of *The Walking Dead* will mirror what happened in the comics. "Every now and then we're able to do little things to make the comic book fans think we're going to do something that we end up *not* doing. That's always fun to do *Walking Dead*-wise." Kirkman is also helping to develop a spin off of the hit zombie show for AMC. "I'm working with showrunner Dave Erickson (*Sons Of Anarchy*) to develop that into a living, breathing organism. It's been fun and we're making great strides towards getting it on air."



it appears with *Thief Of Thieves* that it's ended up being a very long process. *The Walking Dead* was also a very long process (it was in its seventh year of publication when the TV show debuted in 2010) so hopefully we'll achieve similar success with *Thief Of Thieves* in the end."

Kirkman is acting as a TV-style showrunner on *Thief Of Thieves*. Authors including Nick Spencer and James Asmus have paired with regular artist Shawn Martinbrough but Andy Diggle assumed the scripting reins permanently with #20. "The comic book series is going strong and we're currently in the middle of a new storyline 'The Hit List', which will bring about some big changes. It's kind of a defining moment in (lead character and master thief) Conrad Paulson's life as things are about to get shaken up."

Three monthly comics, overseeing another book *and* acting as executive producer and occasional scriptwriter on *The Walking Dead*: you have to wonder how Kirkman manages to fit it all in. "It's not easy but I enjoy what I do, so I don't mind the extra work. As long as I enjoy what I'm doing, I'll be able to continue at this pace, although it does get a little hairy every now and then when the deadlines line up in inconvenient ways."

***Outcast #1** is out now, as is **Thief Of Thieves** #22 and **The Walking Dead** #129.*

"THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD..."

CHARLEY'S WAR

A century after the outbreak of the First World War **Matthew Badham** jumps into the trenches alongside a 16-year-old soldier called Charley Bourne

THE STORY OF A SOLDIER IN WORLD WAR ONE
"The Ritz", France.
June 2nd 1916
Dear Dad,
I have finally arrived at the Western Front and its not nearly as bad as they make out so tell Ma to STOP WORRYING! Thank her for the cakes and also remember Auntie Mabel for the scarf she nitted.
We are going to march to S...
It seems like only yesterday I was walking at the London.
GARN! CHARLEY WILL NEVER FALL FOR IT – NO-ONE CAN BE THAT STUPID!
CHARLEY BOURNE IS – I RECKON THEY DROPPED HIM ON HIS HEAD WHEN HE WAS A BABY!
HEY, CHARLEY! FRED, THE HORSE, HAS BEEN COMMANDEERED FOR WAR WORK. THE MANAGER WANTS TO SEE BOTH OF YOU IN HIS OFFICE IMMEDIATELY!
WHAT OLD FRED, TOO?
THAT'S RIGHT, CHARLEY. NOW HURRY IT UP – OR YOU'LL CATCH IT.
HOW ABOUT THAT, FRED? YOU'VE GOT SOME WORK AT LAST, MATE. I KNOW YOU'VE FELT LEFT OUT OF IT SINCE THEY STOPPED THE HORSE-DRAWN BUSES.
IS THIS YOUR IDEA OF A JOKE, BOURNE? THE MILITARY WON'T WANT THAT BROKEN-DOWN NAG! GET HIM OUT! AS FOR YOU...

Is *Charley's War* the best British war comic of all time? Quite possibly. It's arguably the best of its type, not least according to Calum Laird, who – as editor of *Commando Picture Library* – certainly knows a thing or two about war stories. "I think writer Pat Mills got the blend of the character of Charley and the fantastic cast that he put around him just right – and he'd done his research."

Charley's War made its debut in 1979 in boys' anthology comic *Battle Picture Weekly*. Charley Bourne is just 16 when he joins up to fight in the First World War and too young to see action. He lies about his age and then gets his made-up birth year wrong on the form but, as the recruiting sergeant remarks to a colleague, "You don't need to be clever to fight in the trenches. He's a tough-looking lad – he'll do!"

The supporting cast – made up of several well-rounded characters whose stories could probably have supported their own strips – included his faithful but pessimistic friend Ginger Jones, Sergeant "Ole Bill" Tozer (who became something of a father figure) and Captain Snell, an officer whose cruelty sometimes tipped over into actual sadism. On occasion, Mills also took the spotlight away from Charley to focus on »

> **"Mills got the blend of Charley and his cast just right"**

Above: Our introduction to chipper Charley – it's heartbreaking how young and naïve he is

SEPTEMBER 1917... ÉTAPLES, FRANCE. CHARLEY BOURNE CONFRONTED A GANG OF SAND-BAGGERS... ARMY DESERTERS ...STEALING MEAT FROM THE COOKHOUSE. TO HIS SURPRISE, THEIR LEADER TURNED OUT TO BE AN OLD FRIEND CALLED BLUE, A SOLDIER ON THE RUN FROM THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION, WHO WAS NOW POSING AS A BRITISH OFFICER.
WE'RE GOING TO DEAL WITH YOU ...THE SANDBAGGER WAY!
LET HIM GO, GUNBOAT! CHARLEY IS MY PAL!
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, BLUE?
IT'S A LONG STORY, CHARLEY ...BUT MY MEN IN 'SANCTUARY' NEED THAT MEAT. ALL I'M ASKING YOU TO DO IS TURN A BLIND EYE.
I CAN'T DO THAT, BLUE. THE BOYS IN THE BULL-RING WILL BE COMING BACK SOON, HUNGRY FOR THEIR DINNER.
FAIR ENOUGH, CHARLEY. I DON'T WANT TO FIGHT YOU. WE'LL UNLOAD THE MEAT...
UUUUGGGH!
SORRY, CHARLEY, OUR NEED IS GREATER THAN YOURS!

The Jerries weren't the only enemy Charley would come up against.

CLEAR OFF, OILEY, BEFORE I LOSE MY TEMPER.
YOU WOULDN'T HIT A CRIPPLE CHARLEY? ANYWAY, REMEMBER I SAID I'D PAY YOU FOR LOOKING AFTER ME? WELL, I RECKON YOU DESERVE TWENTY POUNDS FOR SAVING MY LIFE!
TWENTY QUID! I'VE NEVER SEEN SO MUCH MONEY! IT'S A FORTUNE TO A BLOKE LIKE ME!

other characters, such as his cousin Jack, a sailor in the Royal Navy.

Writer Pat Mills and artist Joe Colquhoun took a more realistic and less gung-ho approach to war than other British comics of the day. Charley is a working class lad who joins up in a fit of patriotic fervour. As the story unfolds, though, he soon realises that he's massively out of his depth.

"It was very important that Charley was working class," Mills explains. "It was a class war. The majority that died were working class. To use the Last Tommy, Harry Patch's words, it was organised murder. My only regret is that I couldn't explore that aspect further."

A provocative statement, but then the First World War is a subject that stirs strong emotions. It's a credit to Mills, then, that despite his passionate views, *Charley's War* does not read as a polemic. At times, however, it *is* controversial. In issue #6, Charley and his fellow soldiers talk excitedly about going over the top and killing the 'Jerries' – they think the Germans have already been softened up by heavy shelling. Lieutenant Thomas, stood listening, knows that the Germans are too deeply dug in for the shelling to have had any effect, but dares not contradict the official line for fear of a court-martial.

"And when I lead my men 'over the top'," he muses, in a thought balloon, "it's they who will be massacred by German machine-guns! You fools... you poor, blind brave fools! When the Battle of the Somme

LESSON ONE: HOW TO STOP YOUR FRIEND BLOWING HIS FOOT OFF !
CHARLEY'S WAR
JUNE 1916... A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME. CHARLEY BOURNE IS ON A SENTRY DUTY WHEN HE FINDS HIS FELLOW SENTRY "LUCKY" IS ABOUT TO WOUND HIMSELF RATHER THAN FACE "GOING OVER THE TOP"...
IF I SHOOT ME FOOT THROUGH THE SANDBAG—THERE'LL BE NO BLOIN MARKS! THEY WON'T BE ABLE TO PROVE A THING...! I CAN'T TAKE NO MORE OF THIS WAR, CHARLEY!
BUT IT AIN'T WORTH IT, LUCKY! COME ON, CHUM, THE WAR AIN'T THAT BAD!
WHAT DO YOU KNOW? ME—I'VE HAD TWO YEARS OF BEING GASSED, BOMBED AND SHOT AT! SEEIN' ME MATES DIE ALL AROUND ME! WELL, I'M GOING TO SURVIVE, YOU HEAR?
I'VE BEEN LUCKY SO FAR—BU' MY LUCK CAN'T HOLD OUT FOREVER! I DON'T TRY TO STOP ME, CHARLEY!
I'M SORRY, LUCKY I CAN'T LET YOU DO IT!
WHY, YOU LITTLE TYKE!
YOU WON'T STOP ME! I CAN'T TAKE NO MORE DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?
I EAT ANOTHER LUMP OF BULLY BEEF, SMALL BERCAM...!
ARF A MO' CHUMS! LOOK WHAT I "WON"!

Commando
A GUY NEEDS GUTS
RED RUNS THE RIVER
DOG FIGHT!
£1.45
FOR ACTION AND ADVENTURE
SKY SNIPER
£1.50
DOOM
Jeopardy or jingoism?
There was a time when the British newsstands were stuffed full of war comics. Warlord, Battle Picture Weekly and briefly, Fury from Marvel UK. Now only Commando Picture Library remains. At the time of writing it had just published issue #4714 (admittedly some have been reprints) and a sizeable number of its stories have been set during the First World War, which seems to be popular with both creators and readers.
The First World War is a good setting for stories because, particularly from a British point of view, the range is huge, says Calum Laird of Commando. Characters can be picked up and popped down almost anywhere, taking them out of Bolton, say, and putting them in Brussels or even Baghdad. You don't even have to explain – you can just say the unit was sent there. That allows an author a huge amount of latitude, particularly if they're developing a long storyline.
Old British war comics could sometimes be accused of jingoism, though Captain Hurricane, whose eponymous strip was set during the Second World War, was casually, one might say flippantly, racist and had an alarming tendency to refer to the Huns and the Nips. According to Laird, Commando has, for the most part, managed to avoid going down that road.
We've been reprinting 50-year-old strips and in a lot of the older stories the adversaries are actually given a fair crack of the whip, he says.

> **“It was a class war. To use Harry Patch's words, it was organised murder”**

begins – it's you who will die on the poppy fields of France!"

Charley's War can be described as anti-war, but that's mostly because of the soldier's-eye view the story takes, rather than any hectoring or lecturing on the part of Mills. The atrocities and daily degradations he and Colquhoun show don't need dressing up. When Charley's friend is killed by a shell, he has to collect his exploded remains in a sack for burial. The haunted look on Charley's face as he grips the sack is pitch-perfect; in fact Joe Colquhoun's exquisite artwork is crucial to the strip's success.

Colquhoun, who died in 1987, had experience in this field, having worked on war stories such as *Johnny Red* and *Soldier*

Out of action, but not out of danger.
R.T.O.
CHARLEY WAS LAID WITH OTHER WOUNDED SOLDIERS WAITING FOR TRANSPORTATION TO THE BASE HOSPITAL AT ETAPLES.
THE TRAIN WON'T BE LONG, TOMMY.

THEN, AS ICY WINDS CAUGHT THE AIRSHIP,
SHE IS NOT RESPONDING TO THE HELM, HERR KAPITAN! I MUST HAVE MORE POWER!
VERY WELL... ATTENTION, ALL ENGINES! QUARTER SPEED!

USING THE NEW COMPASS BEARINGS, THE OFFICER PLOTTED THE ZEPPELIN'S COURSE.
IT'S COMING IN ILFORD, BARKING WAY... MAYBE FURTHER EAST...
NO... BOB SAYS THE ZEPP'S ENGINES ARE GETTING LOUDER! BUT WHERE IS IT HEADING FOR? WHAT'S ITS TARGET?

THE DOCKS AND MUNITION FACTORIES AT SILVERTOWN! I'LL STAKE MY LIFE ON IT!
NO! NOT SILVERTOWN! NOT AGAIN!
THERE HAD BEEN A TERRIBLE DISASTER AT SILVERTOWN SOME WEEKS BEFORE.

A "BLIGHTY" WAS THE WOUND EVERY TOMMY PRAYED FOR... A SERIOUS INJURY THAT WOULD SEND HIM BACK TO BRITAIN!
I... GOT... A 'BLIGHTY'!! I... GOT... A 'BLIGHTY'!
THAT'S RIGHT, BOURNE! NOW STOP BLEEDING ALL OVER ME AND LET'S GO!

MY MUM... SHE'S ON NIGHT SHIFT IN THE SHELL FACTORY!
WE HAVE NO TELEPHONE CONNECTION WITH THEM! LOOK - YOU GET DOWN THERE AND WARN THEM, LAD! WE'LL ALERT THE GUNS!
BORROW MY BIKE, CHARLEY!

IF CHARLEY PEDALS FAST HE MAY JUST BEAT THE ZEPPELIN TO SILVERTOWN!
BUT IF NOT... THERE'LL BE AN EVEN BIGGER DISASTER THAN LAST TIME!

BUT YOU'VE DONE YOUR BIT, LAD. NOW CLIMB ON MY BACK! I'LL CARRY YOU BACK TO MY SECTION.
B – BUT THERE'S N– NOTHING WRONG WITH ME... I'LL BE ALL RIGHT ONCE I ST–STOP SH – SHAKING!

Sharp – Rat Of The Rifles for *Battle*, and Mills's copious research for *Charley's War* was ably buttressed by his artist's ability to convey the realities of war and the interior lives of its combatants.

"Joe brought humour, characterisation, detail and emotion to the art," Mills recalls. "He was unbeatable."

Calum Laird agrees. "Sometimes a reader doesn't realise they're taking in information from a picture, because they're just looking at it. They don't realise that at a subconscious level, they're registering the pain and emotion of the characters, which isn't necessarily written down in the captions or speech and thought balloons. Joe was very, very good at that sort of thing."

Colquhoun's gift for characterisation also meant that each soldier's appearance was visually distinctive as well as appropriate to his personality. The reader would never mistake the bespectacled and somewhat rat-like Smith 70, for example, for the (initially, at least) fresh-faced Charley.

"Joe's artwork is just so wonderful," enthuses Simon Ward from Titan Books, which has reprinted Mills and Colquhoun's work in 10 collections (Ward edited the tenth). "It's so detailed and he packs so much into a panel. It amazes me how he can get so much in while keeping the pacing."

Mills sometimes used Charley's letters home to frame, explain and comment (often ironically) on the story.

When Charley writes to tell his mum that he's met a brave lad called Alf Partridge, and that they're having a singsong, he neglects to mention that he's had to drag the wounded Alf across No Man's Land while being fired on by an enemy sniper, only to watch him die of his wounds once they find cover.

WAR IS OVER

This, then, was *Charley's War*, an epic adventure story with a social conscience. Mills intended to take Charley's story right up to the 1930s, where we'd find our

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN THAT BAG, SOLDIER? IF YOU'VE BEEN STEALING SUPPLIES...
CHARLEY DID NOT REPLY. HE WAS USED ONLY AS A MAN IN A WORLD OF HIS OWN.
I'LL ASK YOU AGAIN, SOLDIER. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT IN THAT BAG?
MY MATE, SIR. MY MATE, BINGER.

Colquhoun's nailed Charley's torment.

YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU, CHARLEEEEEE!
...NEEDS YOOOOOOU!
KEEP AWAY FROM ME!
COME ON, CHARLEY! SNAP OUT OF IT!
LOOK... LOOK! THAT SCREAMING SKULL. CAN I YOU SEE IT?
HE WON'T HURT YOU, CHARLEY. HE'S BEEN THERE SINCE THE RETREAT FROM MONS!

Mills wasn't afraid to tell it like it was.

"It tells an important story about a war that should not be forgotten"

eponymous hero on the dole – one more victim of the Great Depression. But he only reached 1919 (at which point Charley was fighting the Bolsheviks in Russia) before a row over his research budget caused him to walk; his last episode was published in January 1985. Mills was replaced by Scott Goodall but, despite Colquhoun's bravura art, the strip was never quite the same again. The final episode appeared in October 1985 and saw Charley reminiscing about how he had first got into soldiering. Reprints of his adventures followed and lasted until *Battle* folded.

"The relevance of *Charley's War* has never gone away," Ward contends, "and as time goes on, more and more people discover the strip. We receive a lot of letters about it. People talking about the comic, how pleased they are to see it reprinted and how much reading it has meant to them. I think, ultimately, the reason that it's so effective is that it tells an important story about a war that should not be forgotten. Also, when it comes to its realism, pacing and the subjects it dared to cover, *Charley's War* is – in terms of comics – unique." CH

***Charley's War** has been collected into 10 volumes by Titan Books. You can order copies at www.titanbooks.com*

Comic commemoration

Several new titles are being released to mark the centenary of the start of the First World War. Anthology *To End All Wars*, from publisher Soaring Penguin, features more than 50 contributors from 13 different countries. Established talents such as Kate Charlesworth and the Pleece Brothers rub shoulders with less well-known creators such as Joe Gordon, Andy Luke, Matt Soffe and Selina Lock. The stories cover a range of topics, including shellshock, the subject of Jonathan Clode's *The Coward's War*.

"I was interested in learning about the logic that led the British Expeditionary Force to use capital punishment as a deterrent as much as a punishment," says Clode.

"Perhaps the most fascinating thing about it all is that shellshock – or post-traumatic stress disorder, as we now understand it – wasn't a genuine concern until well into the war. While the ignorance of the time doesn't justify the actions of those who signed the death warrants, it's easier to understand than the modern viewpoint that, in some quarters, still tags these men as cowards and traitors."

White Death, a graphic novel by Robbie Morrison (*The Authority*, *Nikolai Dante*) and Charlie Adlard (*The Walking Dead*) first came out in 1998 and is being republished in August. It details trench warfare in the Trentino, Dolomite and Caporetto mountains on the Italian/Austro-Hungarian border. Here, avalanches were used as weapons of war, both sides deliberately triggering snow slides with their artillery.

Finally, mention must be made of the First World War comics of French cartoonist Jacques Tardi. *It Was The War Of The Trenches* and *Goddamn This War!* are both available in English from Fantagraphics.

DRAWN TO THE MAN OF STEEL

"Until John Romita Jr draws Superman, Make Mine Marvel..." Oh, hang on. John Romita Jr *has* jumped ship to DC. He tells **Joel Meadows** why he made the move

Images © DC.

There are a few artists who become synonymous with a specific publisher. Their careers begin there and they spend most of their working life drawing for them. You couldn't think of the sadly departed Joe Kubert without his work for DC, or John Buscema and his decades working almost exclusively for Marvel.

John Romita Jr's roots are even more entangled with one particular company. The son of '60s Marvel artist John Romita, he has a career stretching back to the second half of the '70s. Drawing everything from *X-Men* to *Thor*, *Daredevil* to *The Eternals*, Romita Jr has become arguably the ultimate Marvel artist of the past four decades.

So the announcement that he was going to jump ship from the company he and his family have been associated with for decades (his mother Virginia also worked at the Marvel offices) to draw DC's flagship character Superman came as quite a surprise. But he admits to *Comic Heroes* that he has considered working for the competition before.

"Actually, I always imagined that if I worked for DC, it would be on *Batman*," he reveals, "because physically and visually I just think it's a great costume. I never imagined it would be *Superman*."

"I was coming to the end of my contract at Marvel," Romita Jr recalls. "So I went to the San Diego Comic Con and I ran into Dan Didio [DC co-publisher]. We started talking as friends and decided to have breakfast and the conversation came up about working for DC. Something came into my head about an idea that I had for a storyline that could apply to Superman. When I mentioned it to Dan, he loved it and we went from there. We didn't do that storyline because we wanted it to be in continuity. It's something completely different from what I expected. I've been looking for something completely different and here we are."

"I always imagined that if I worked for DC it'd be on *Batman*"

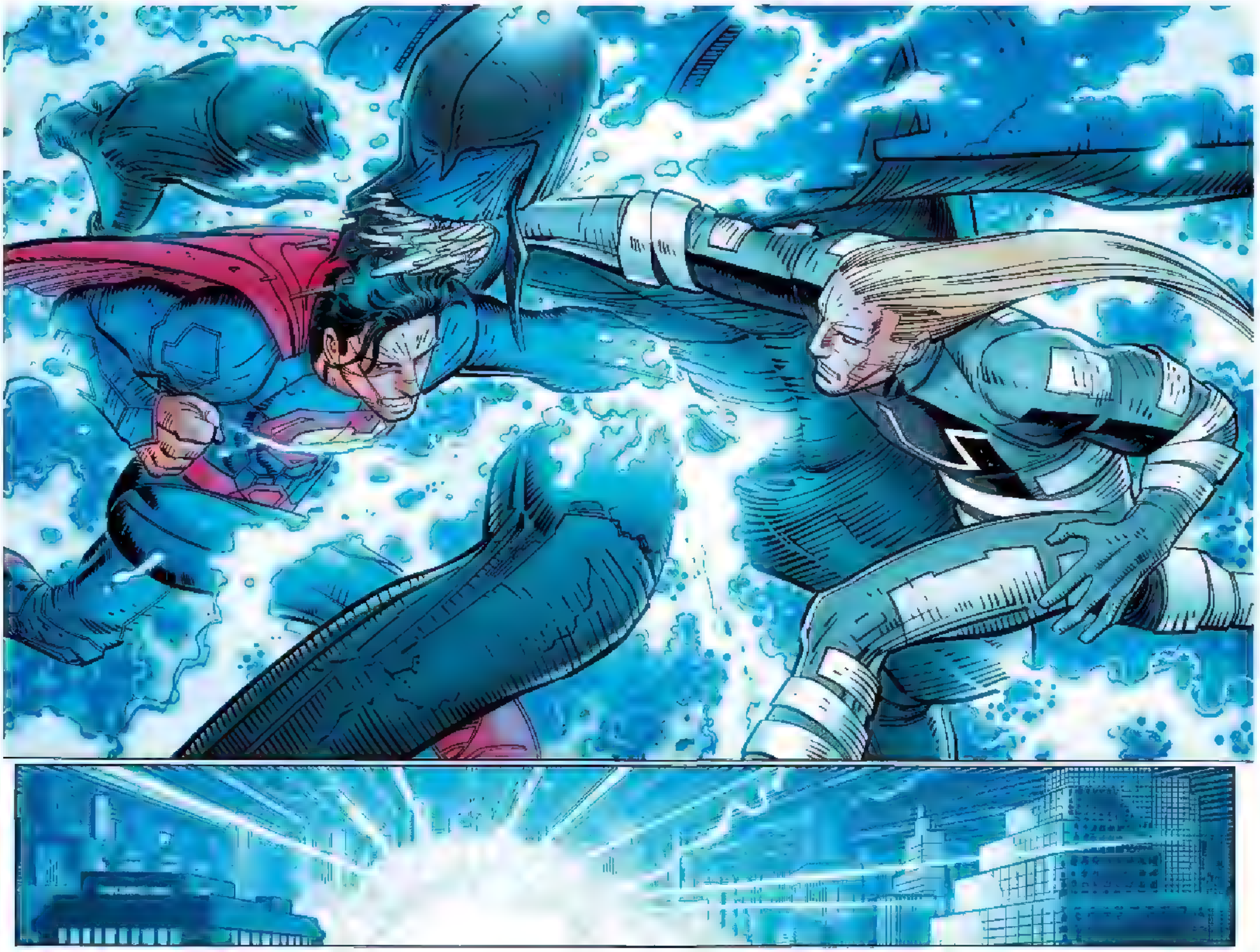
Above left: Who'd have thought it...? John Romita Jr drawing Superman!

Superman's costume has been redesigned for the New 52 and Romita Jr is using Jim Lee's vision as the basis for the way he's drawing the Man of Steel.

"I was given Lee's sketch of the costume because, to be honest, the reference I have isn't all that clear from panel to panel. So it might be off just a touch but if it *is* off, then it's because I'm a lousy artist!"

GO-TO GUY

Romita Jr is working with DC veteran writer Geoff Johns on *Superman* but despite knowing each other socially, Romita didn't really have much of a »

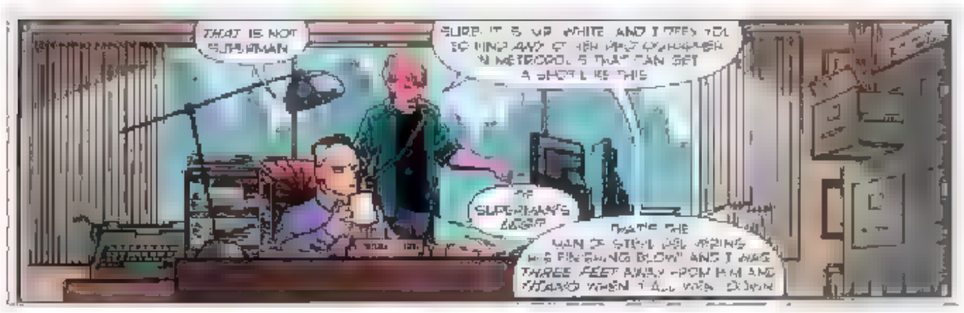


professional connection with Johns prior to this project.

"Geoff and I have only met at bars at conventions which is really sad, but true. I'd heard all sorts of great things about him but I'd never read any of his books or his scripts. I don't do a lot of reading – I usually just look at the pictures because I'm always looking at the competition. When I was told that it was a possibility that Geoff could work with me, that cemented my desire to work on *Superman* because his history goes back and his reputation precedes him. People said 'That's the guy you want to work with if you ever do work at DC', and here we are. When I started reading his stuff I realised that what everybody was saying was exactly right."

Klaus Janson, an inker who has worked with Romita Jr before, most notably on *Daredevil*, is also joining the new team. "He's always my first choice. I think he's a brilliant artist and just as good as an inker. It's the same as working with Tom Palmer on *Kick Ass* [co-created by Romita Jr and Mark Millar]. They're both artists who just happen to be inkers so it really helps out. They've also saved my bacon on more than one occasion with corrections and repairs!"

Above: We do know that Superman gets a new foe in the form of golden ha red Ulysses


THAT IS NOT SUPERMAN
SURE IT'S UP WHITE AND I TRIED TO BRING ANY OF THEM INTO CUSTODY IN METROPOL'S THAT CAN GET A SHOT LIKE THIS
THE SUPERMAN'S LASER
THAT'S THE MAN OF STEEL JUST PRAYING HIS FINGERS BLOW AND I WAS THREE FEET AWAY FROM HIM AND

MIRROR, MIRROR

Romita Jr is tight-lipped when we ask him about the upcoming *Superman* storyline, but he does reveal how much work he's put in.

"I can't say anything about the story as we're trying to keep things under wraps. Unless Geoff Johns and the editors at DC come forward with information, I'm not going to do that. I've only just begun working on it and I should keep my mouth shut.

"It doesn't veer too far from what I've done before, though: there is the supernatural with the natural. In all honesty, I have to keep looking at reference for the new universe and that makes things a little bit difficult for a while. Once I get used to my surroundings and the faces, it'll get a little bit easier. When I do get to that point, one thing I do like to do is use familiarity, things around me, and the world that I'm in. I like to look at clothes and locations so I can use my memory as opposed to having to get reference off the internet.

"But the casual moments are the same way as before. I find myself doing facial expressions in the mirror and the same with hands and elbows and so on – I have a full length mirror in my office. When it comes to clothing, every year I update my fashion reference and that's especially relevant for Lois and the character Jackie that we're introducing. They have to be more cosmopolitan than regular females because they are who they are. So I like to have reference from fashion magazines. Clark is a little bit of a casual kind of guy, sneakers every once in a while which is great, while Jimmy Olsen, of course, is forever a teen so there's a lot of reference I've got to get and I embrace that. But until I get comfortable with the faces and their apartments and so on, I'm still very much in the learning process."

So how different is it working for DC rather than Marvel? "There's no difference in the job. Working for two different companies, two sets of people, everyone is nice. Everybody's always been nice. Not when I first started at Marvel, of course. I was a little punk kid then. But now I know so many people and I've been around long

“You story tell, and you draw, and you make people happy”

enough, so people have experienced my work and there's a comfort zone that way. But the physical nature of the job stays the same. You get a script or you get a plot. You story tell, and you draw, and you get it right and in on time, and you make people happy.”

SALES TALK

The business has changed significantly since Romita Jr made his comic book debut back in 1977 (with a six-page story called “Chaos At The Coffee Bean!” in *The Amazing Spider-Man Annual* #11) but he sees those changes as a good thing.

“My storytelling has improved because I've become a student of storytelling and that was due to not being that good an artist in the first place. I needed to rely on one thing that I could do strongly and that was tell a story. But what has changed is the quality of the writing. Because of the closeness of the movie industry to the comics industry, screenwriters use the industry so to speak and comic writers and comic artists use the movie industry. So the storylines and the characters have improved because of it. And as an artist you have to raise your bar to meet those stories.

“With something like Mark Millar and *Kick Ass*, the challenges on that book are hard to describe, and the scenes that he asked for… when I worked with him on *Wolverine*, he asked for some amazing scenes. That's changed from the earlier years. I spoke to my father and he laughed. He said, ‘Nobody ever asked me to do something like this!’ Although when he worked with Stan Lee, there were challenging moments. It's just that the size and the scope of the stories has changed: it's basically Cecil B DeMille with a cast of a million. And the more you put into it, the more reaction you get from sales. And that is the ultimate change. They pay better if your sales are higher and you bust buns and get down to dollars and cents. It's an overall raising of the bar. Every aspect of it, including printing, colouring, promotion and marketing, drawing and writing.”

Romita Jr wouldn't be drawn on the length of his contract with DC but he seemed hopeful it would last for a while.

“It should be a year or two, depending on how many issues we get through. There is a set amount of time that I am supposed to be on it for, and that could change depending on the creativity. As long as I don't go dancing round Manhattan in my underwear, I'm sure DC will keep me!”

With a book featuring such a well-known character, there is bound to be extra attention focused on its artist but Romita Jr seems to see that as a positive as well.

“There's the pressure that I put on myself – I should never have done this but before I even pencilled the first page, I read a couple of reactions to the announcement. I've been in the business long enough and I also carry a lot of history and that means that there's more people to like me and more people to hate me. The people who aren't fans of mine are louder and more boisterous than the people who love me. So I did read a couple of negative reactions but all it does is inspire me.

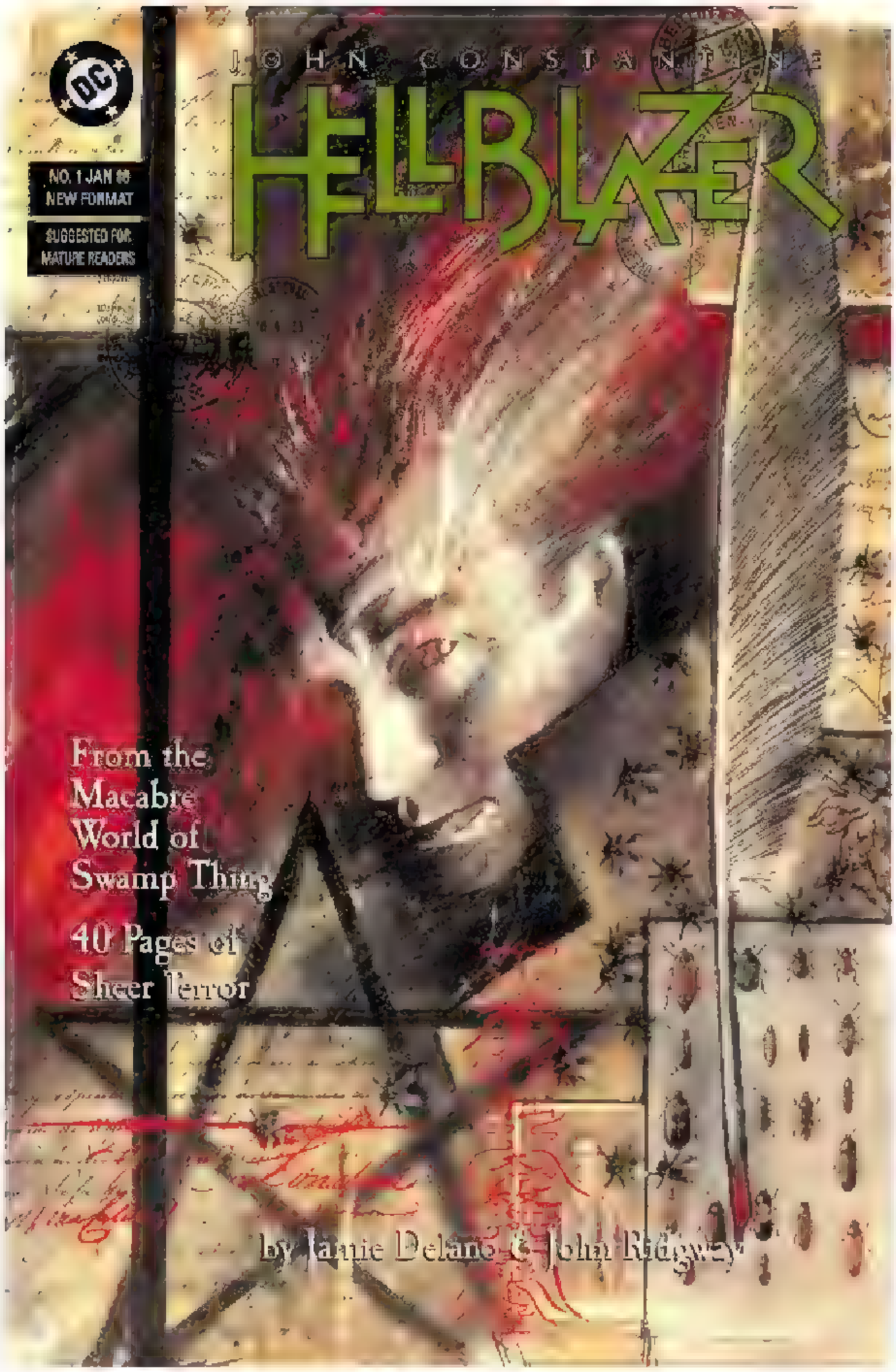
“I shouldn't pay attention to it but I do because it keeps my feet on the ground. I still have to pay the bills, I still have to do work. I told a few family members that I'm working for DC now and the contract was a little bit different and they said: ‘Boy, it must be great knowing that you're in that comfort zone.’ So I said, ‘No I still have to work. I don't get paid if I'm sitting at a desk doing nothing.’ People forget that. What keeps writers and artists on their toes is if you don't produce and you don't sell, you don't get paid.”

Above left: The grunt-faced, slobber-fi ed cover of the all new issue #32

***Superman** #32 – the first by Johns and Romita Jr – is on sale now.*

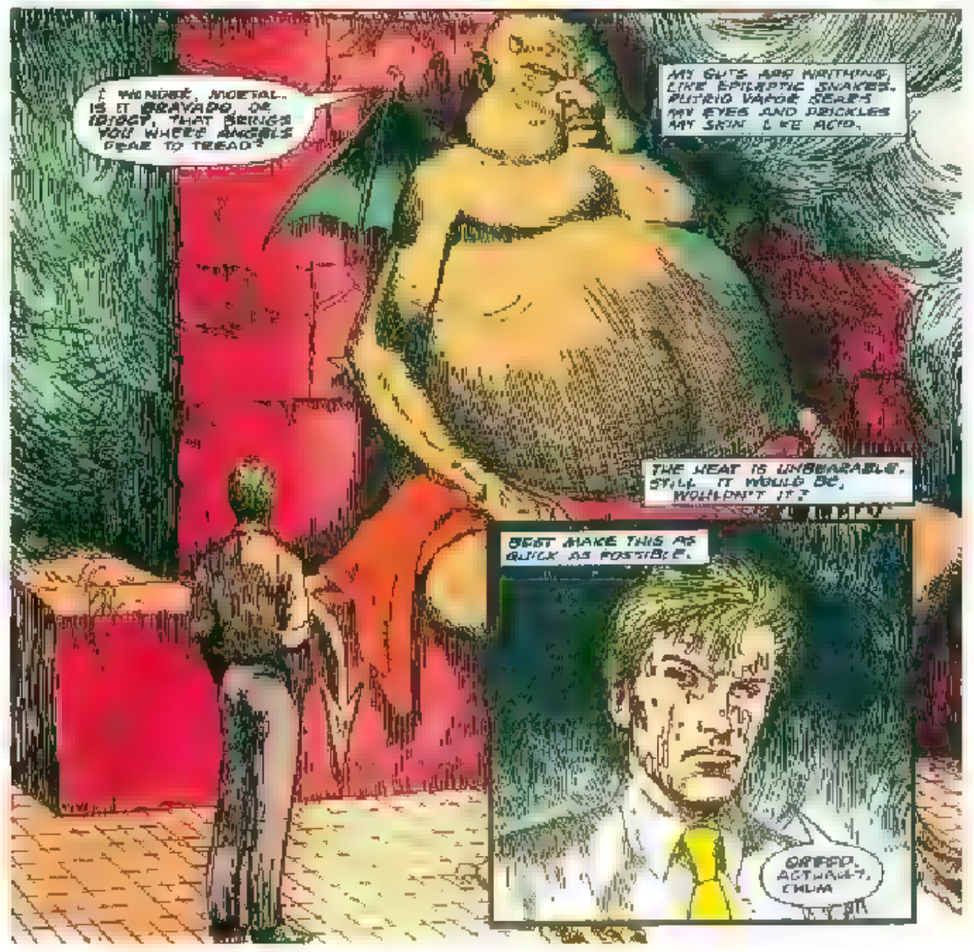
RAISING HELLBLAZER

Sorcerer. Conman. Antihero. Detective. Trickster... **Joseph McCabe** explores the *many* faces of John Constantine



All images © DC

I'VE NEVER BOTHERED WITH THE CATS FOR THIS RITUAL. TOO HARD TO CATCH AND THEY SHRIEK LIKE FURY WHEN YOU IMPALE THEM.
ANYWAY, ALL THAT MESSING ABOUT WITH ROTTEN CORPSES AND PAIN STUFF IS JUST TO IMPRESS THE MARKS -- ALL YOU REALLY NEED ARE THE RIGHT CONTACTS AND A BIT OF NERVE.
WAKE UP, BLATHOK! YOU BLADDER OF BILE. IT'S ME JOHN CONSTANTINE. I WANT A WORD WITH YOU.
C'MON, YOU BUG-EAC DON'T KEEP ME WAITING AN CALL'S IN YOUR MARKER, NOW.
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU? I CALLED FOR THE LORD OF FLATULENCE, NOT ONE OF HIS DISCHARGES.
FFZZZT
IN HEH I AM THE STEWARD OF THE CLUB WHEREIN THE LORD BLATHOK TAKES HIS EASE. HE COMMANDS ME TO INFORM YOU THAT YOUR RITUAL WAS INCOMPETENT AND INSULTING.
YOU SHOULD HAVE USED THE CATS!


I WONDER, MORTAL. IS IT BRAVADO, OR IDIOCY, THAT BRINGS YOU WHERE ANGELS DARE TO TREAD?
MY GUTS ARE WRITHING LIKE EPILEPTIC SNAKES. PUTRID VAPOR SEARS MY EYES AND BRICKLES MY SKIN LIKE ACID.
THE HEAT IS UNBEARABLE. STILL, IT WOULD BE, WOULDN'T IT?
BEST MAKE THIS AS QUICK AS POSSIBLE.
ORFEO. ACTIVATE. CHUM.

“I’d seen the movie *Quadrophenia* and Sting just had a great face”

John Constantine has borne many names in his almost 30-year career but DC's fair-haired, trench coat-wearing, chain-smoking English rogue began his life as, of all things, a rock star. Inspired by Police frontman Sting, artists Steve Bissette and John Totleben convinced writer Alan Moore to bring the iconic rocker to the pages of their critically acclaimed '80s comic *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing*.

"We used to draw shit and hide it in the pages," laughs Bissette, talking to *Comic Heroes* from his studio in the mountains of Vermont. The illustrator, author and teacher (at his home state's Center for Cartoon Studies) describes the attitude that he and Totleben (a fellow graduate of the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art) exhibited at the time as "childish".

"When we first started on the book with editor Len Wein, John and I would sneak Gumby into every issue – Art Clokey's clay animated character Gumby, from our childhood. If you go back and look at those early issues, the first two or three we did, we'd find a way to sneak Gumby in, and Len would catch us. He'd be like, 'You guys gotta stop doing that!' Then when Karen Berger was on the book it was just this childish impulse... It was the first episode in the Jason Blood trilogy of stories. I was drawing a crowd scene. This guy's been killed by a taxidermy swordfish that slid off the roof of a car. The guy's impaled on the spear of the swordfish, and I drew Sting in the crowd. John and I were big Police fans. John more than I, but he had turned me onto them and I had all the records. Sting just had a great face. I'd seen the movie *Quadrophenia* – he plays a character called Ace Face and he looks great. It was a real childish impulse."

As Totleben explained, when he spoke to *Comic Heroes* back in issue 16: "I was probably the bigger Police fan at that time and I'd read a review of a movie that Sting was in called *Brimstone And Treacle*. I hadn't actually seen it at that point; I'd just read something about it, and it described the character. I thought, 'Man, that would be cool. We need a guy like that, someone who looks a bit like Sting!'

"Initially, of course, he was completely different from what John Constantine ended up being. My original idea was that he'd be sort of a villain stalking Abby, and he'd have this weird psychological twisted thing going on: something more in keeping with *Brimstone And Treacle*.

"Alan, of course, had a need for a completely different type of character that actually fit quite well. So, instead of Sting from *Brimstone And Treacle*, he imagined it more as Sting from *Quadrophenia*. Basically, there was a need for this character, and I think we were all intuiting exactly what that was. But the way it developed it took on a life of its own."

The supernatural detective first appeared in *The Saga Of The Swamp Thing* #37 (June 1985) as the titular Earth »

Above: *Hellblazer* laid its cards on the table early on issue #1 introduced mind melting bugs, meat hungry hordes and the horrors of drug addiction

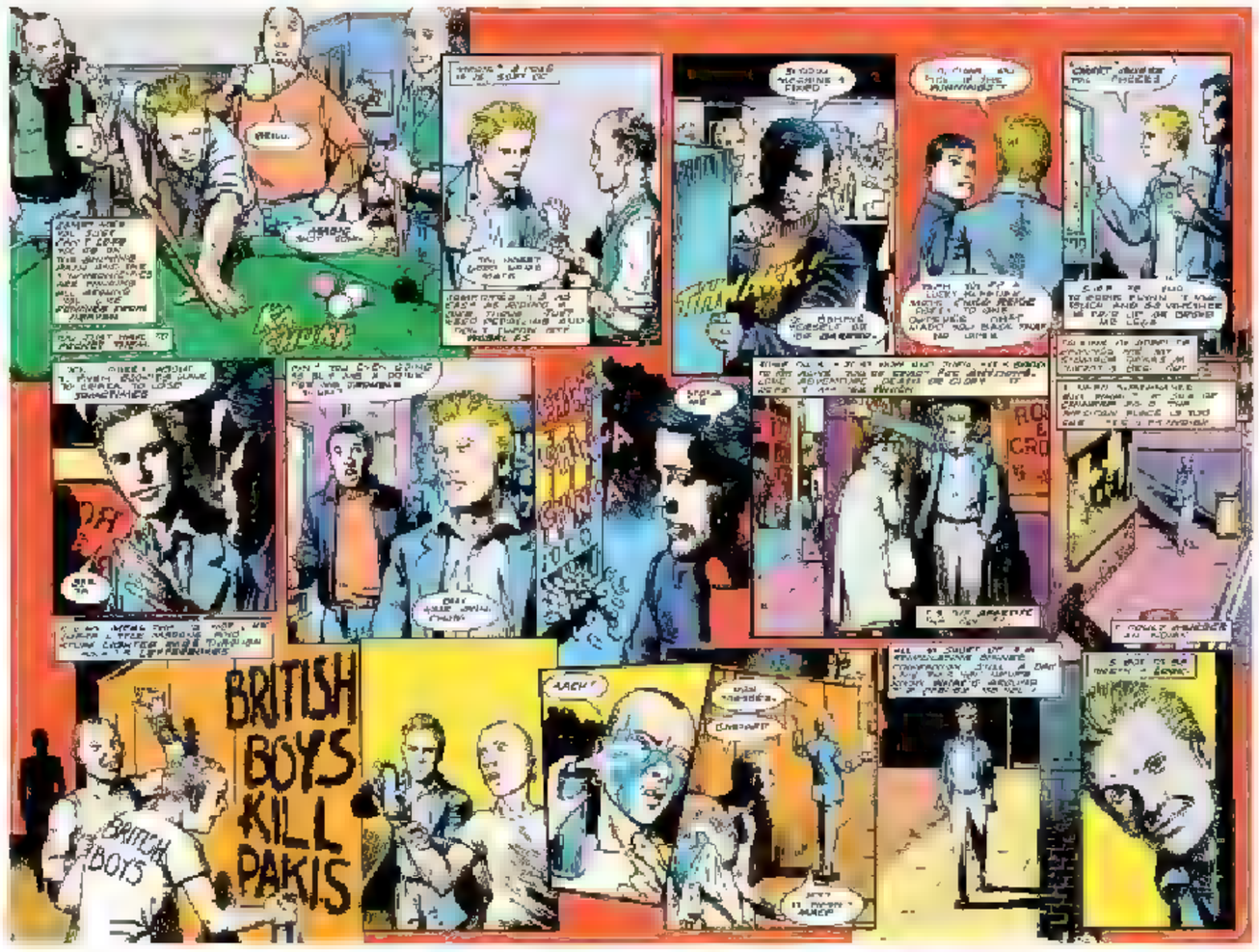
WHO...?
I DON'T KNOW. HE KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU, AND ME. HE SAID...
I SAID I'D TELL THE PEOPLE YOUR MISSUS WORRIES FOR ABOUT HER SLEEPING ARRANGEMENTS!
I'M A NASTY PIECE OF WORK, CHIEF. ASK ANYBODY!
YOU DARE TO THREATEN ME?
LOOK, LET'S NOT HAVE ANY AGGRAVATION, EH?
MY NAME'S JOHN CONSTANTINE, AND I THINK WE COULD DO EACH OTHER A FAVOR.
WHAT'S THAT SMOKE?
YES.
THAT'S RIGHT. AND SINCE FOR THE NEXT FOUR DAYS YOU'RE GOING TO BE ABOUT AS DANGEROUS AS A SWAMP THERE'S NOT MUCH YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT.
BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, MATE...
AND YOU DON'T.
HOW COULD YOU HELP ME?

Elemental's guide and mentor – introducing him to previously unknown powers, such as his ability to regenerate at any point on the planet. The pair's adventures ran through the book's popular "American Gothic" storyline.

"We told Alan," says Bissette, "we're gonna keep drawing him in the background so you better make him a character. It was Alan who created the conceptual nuts, and it was Alan who came up with the occult detective and created out of whole cloth that terrific character, based in part on Michael Moorcock's marvellous Jerry Cornelius – and on Alan's own perverse view of the world. He wanted Constantine to be this character who is always five steps ahead," he adds. "The British punk scene had faded, Goths were in, and Constantine emerged out of that synthesis."

HOW LONG HAVE WE GOT?
OH GOD, I DON'T KNOW! A YEAR? MAYBE LESS.
BLOODY HELL, JOHN, NOW LOOK WHAT YOU'VE MADE ME DO.
ARE YOU STILL HAVING THE NIGHTMARES, THEN?
NO. BUT THAT'S BECAUSE I HAVEN'T BEEN TO SLEEP FOR THREE WEEKS.
PLEASE, JOHN. JUST LEAVE ME ALONE AND GO.

Above: The chain-smoking Sting look-alike makes his debut in *Swamp Thing* #37



Below: Early doors it's clear that Constantine's strength is not just having power, but knowing how to leverage it

Costantine's popularity made his own title inevitable and the first issue of *Hellblazer* appeared in January 1988. *Hellblazer*, Moore's *Swamp Thing*, Neil Gaiman's *Sandman* and Grant Morrison's *Animal Man* were the foundations on which DC's dark fantasy imprint Vertigo would be built; and *Hellblazer* would be the line's longest-running title.

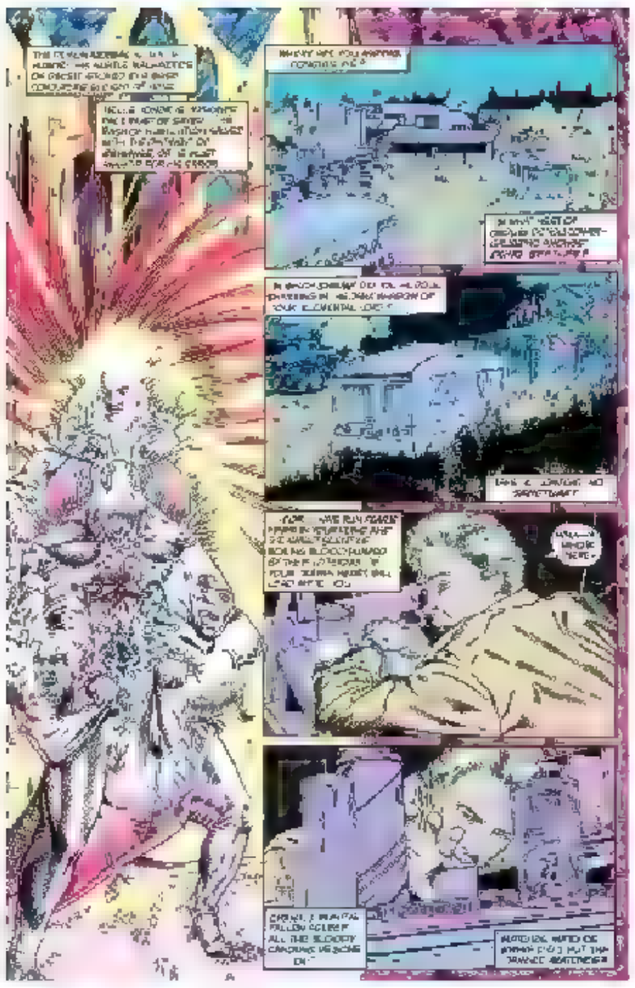
ORIGINAL SINS

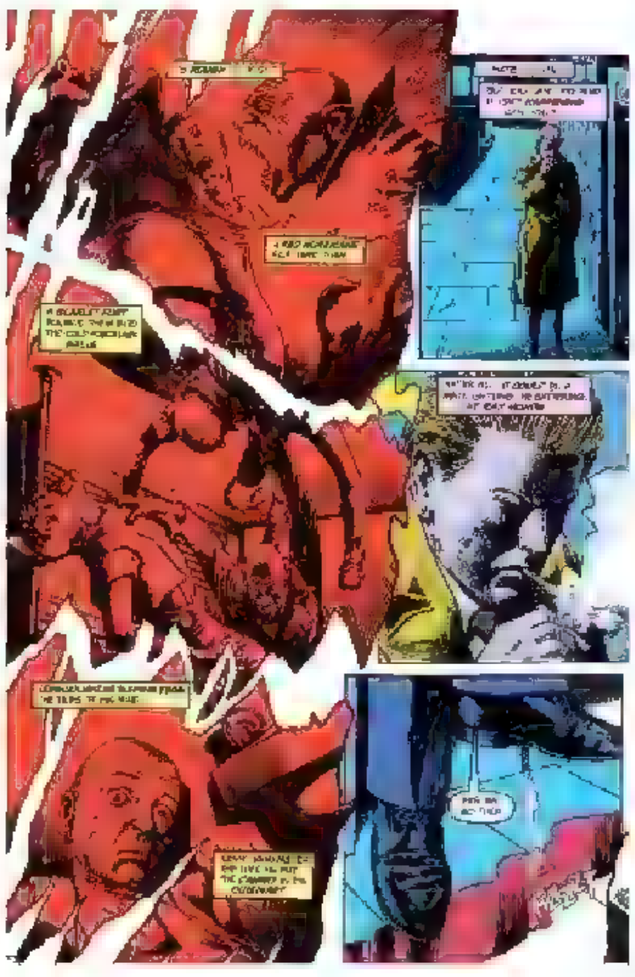
Its first writer, largely responsible for Constantine's origin and background, was another writer in the company's rapidly growing roster of British Invasion authors – Jamie Delano.

Now a novelist, the Northampton native recalls how he came to work on the character. "Wikipedia used to have it that I was 'hand-picked by Alan Moore' to develop John Constantine into a character supporting his own ongoing series. Leaving aside that it makes me feel like some kind of choice farmers' market vegetable, I suspect there's some basic truth in that assertion, albeit perhaps not the whole truth.

"Alan was responsible for inculcating an appreciation of comics as a storytelling medium in my previously prose-oriented soul, and for demonstrating by example that the art form offered a rare opportunity to earn a living as a writer. I'd done some work for Marvel UK and *2000 AD*, and submitted a proposal for an original ongoing series to DC, before Karen Berger called and asked me to come up with an outline that would take John Constantine on. I'd like to think that she saw something in this earlier work, and in my initial proposal, that backed up Alan's recommendation. The fact that Constantine was British and that I was too may also have added a little weight in my favour."

In developing the character, Delano made Constantine a tragic figure, haunted by the memory of a spell he'd cast as a careless young mage; a spell that summoned a





demon to the town of Newcastle and accidentally sent a young girl's soul to Hell.

"I guess I burdened the poor bastard," admits Delano, "with a lot more angst than was necessarily apparent in Constantine's essays into the world of Swamp Thing; or at least exploited the opportunity allowed by the monthly format to discover a few more layers of his psychological complexity. Alan's characters are always well drawn and multifaceted, so I was lucky in having such rich raw material to screw around with, and hopefully live up to. I had little experience and no conscious method by which to go about developing the character, so my approach was generally to prepare my brain for creativity by various patented methods, then spend hours in a state of blank-screen terror until Constantine took pity on me and allowed himself to be 'channelled'. I've always been a seat-of-the-pants kind of writer. The occasional crash and burn is inevitable, but more often I achieve some kind of rickety touchdown

Trenchcoat Television

Constantine's showrunner Daniel [illegible] supernatural and taking inspiratio[illegible]

CH: What period of the [illegible] you draw on for TV's *Constantine*? Did [illegible] Alan Moore issues of *Swamp Thing* or Ja[illegible] on *Hellblazer*?

DANIEL [illegible]: That's a really [illegible] probably one of the most challengin[illegible] adapt because my understanding is t[illegible] longest-running series that was never [illegible] think it ran for something like 25 yea[illegible] interesting about it and unique is that [illegible] aged in real time. We met him in Swa[illegible] young, and then we kind of watched [illegible] something that you don't see happe[illegible] in terms of choosing an access point fo[illegible] very daunting. It was very challenging [illegible] back to the beginning. We were all v[illegible] Moore's initial introduction of Consta[illegible] Frankly we're using that as a major launc[illegible] meeting Constantine at roughly the sam[illegible] when he was introduced in *Swamp Thi*[illegible]

CH: As far as developing the character's h[illegible] in his history fair game?

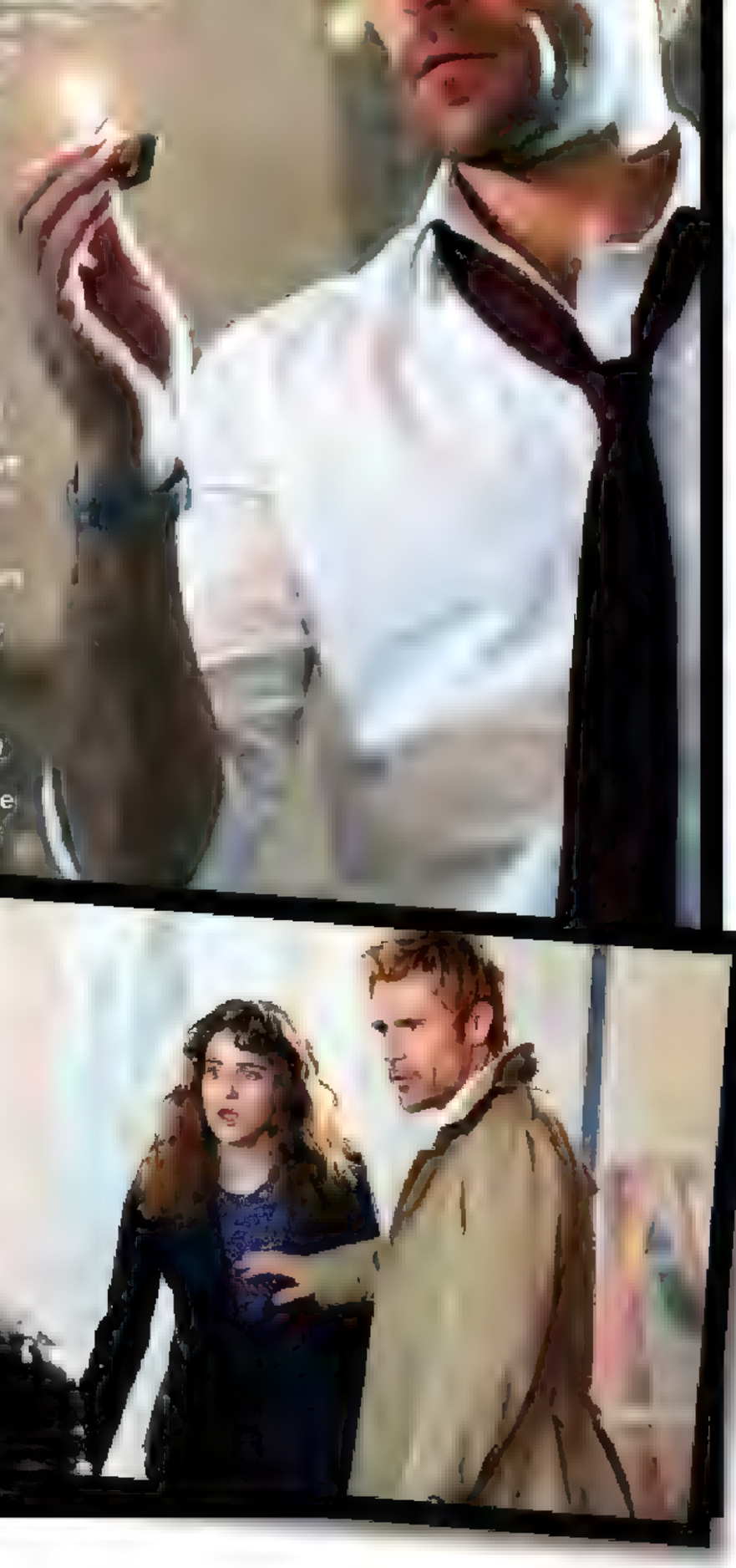
DC: Yeah. We have both serialised storyte[illegible] stories. If you remember the original "Ame[illegible] *Swamp Thing*, basically the conceit there [illegible] darkness is coming". There was an unknown f[illegible] stirring up supernatural entities and forcing c[illegible] things into the light. Supernatural attacks a[illegible] the rise. Constantine essentially works with Swamp Thing to find out what that is. That basic arc is what we're looking at for our series. So within the framework of Constantine investigating what kind of dark force is coming and what's behind it, he is also trying to put out these sort of supernatural brushfires. And within those closed-end stories, we've got 30 years of Constantine to draw on.

CH: Constantine's cigarette habit is a big part of his character – at one point in his history he had terminal lung cancer. Will he smoke on the show?

DC: On our TV show he's a character who [illegible] to smoke. Obviously we fall into [American] Broadcast Television Standards, so we can't necessarily show him smoking. That doesn't mean that he doesn't smoke. But we're gonna try and let audiences know that that's who the character is. Now that might be a scene where we open with Constantine throwing a cigarette on the ground and stubbing it out with his foot. Or maybe we end a scene with Constantine lighting up. Just because we're prohibited from actually showing him smoking doesn't mean that we have to completely neuter him. You just hope that the fans are gonna be understanding enough to know that that's the reality of the marketplace. So within the reality of that marketplace, we're gonna do everything we can to stay true to the core of the character.

CH: Might we see any other supernatural characters from the DC/Vertigo universe?

DC: Yes, definitely. You're gonna see that Constantine ends up inheriting this house that's a repository for many occult and supernatural items. One of them that we'll clearly see in the pilot is Fate's helmet. We're looking for opportunities to meet characters both in the Vertigo and DC universes. The guiding force is that they have to feel organic – but there will definitely be at least one significant DC character in our early episodes.



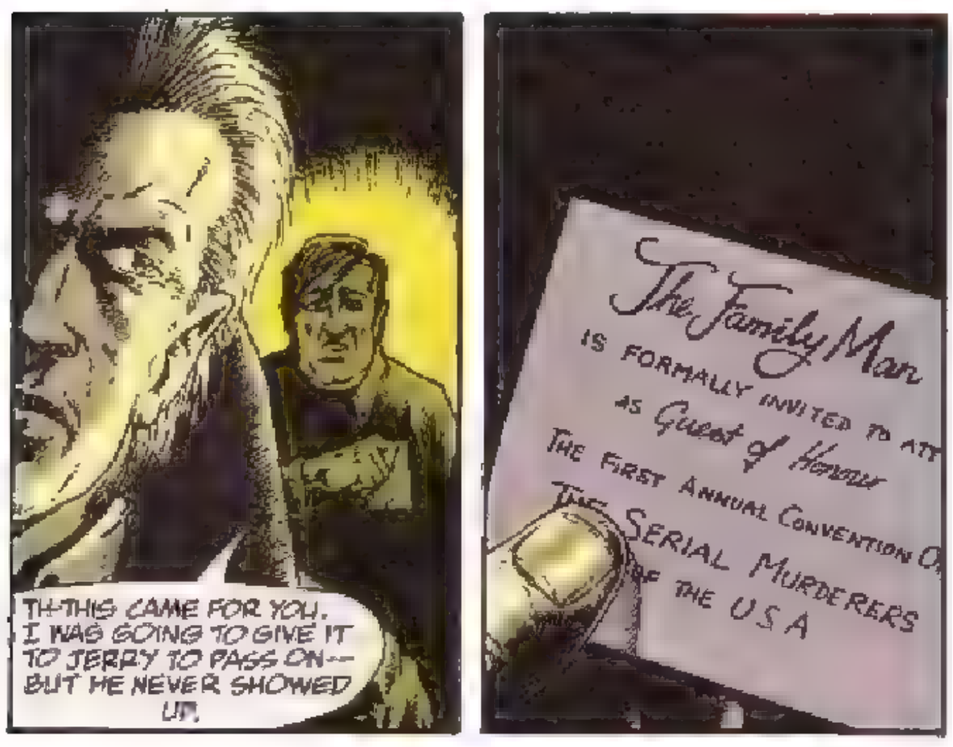
– a nerve-wracking approach to be sure, but at least it's not boring. The more time I spent with Constantine, the more of himself it seemed he revealed, and all I had to do was pick the best bits to write down."

Delano began his run on *Hellblazer* with artist John Ridgeway, who'd previously illustrated *Doctor Who Magazine*. The writer says Ridgeway's work helped fuel his confidence in chronicling Constantine's early adventures.

"I learned a lot about sequential storytelling from working with John, whose comics experience was far greater than mine. I was delighted to see John's realisation of my first *Hellblazer* story; it felt very sympathetically 'British'

Above: De ano never sh ed from the political n "The Fear Mach ne" (issues #14 22), John fell in with a travelling band of environmental activists

Below: In Delano s "The Family Man" Constantine takes on his first human foe, an ex politician turned serial k er


TH-THIS CAME FOR YOU. I WAS GOING TO GIVE IT TO JERRY TO PASS ON-- BUT HE NEVER SHOWED UP.
The Family Man
IS FORMALLY INVITED TO ATT
AS Guest of Honour
THE FIRST ANNUAL CONVENTION O
SERIAL MURDERERS
THE U.S.A

and familiar, and encouraged me to believe I was on the right track. I was disappointed when, after six months or so, John began to feel uncomfortable with the content and themes of some of the stories I was producing and decided to withdraw from the book."

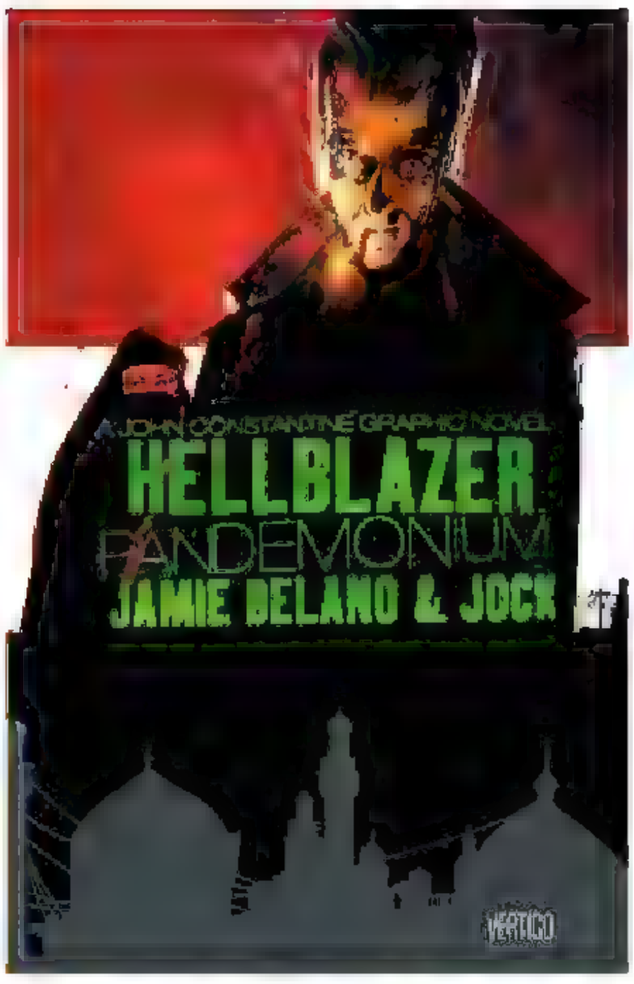
Ridgeway was succeeded by numerous artists, among them David Lloyd, Mark Buckingham and Richard Piers Rayner. With his collaborators, Delano – who stayed on *Hellblazer* for its first 40 issues – depicted some of Constantine's most nightmarish adventures, including "The Devil You Know", "The Fear Machine", and "The Family Man", in which, for the first time, he battled a non-supernatural menace, in the form of a serial killer. During this time, Delano demonstrated his taste for political satire, offering acute criticism of the England of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative politics.

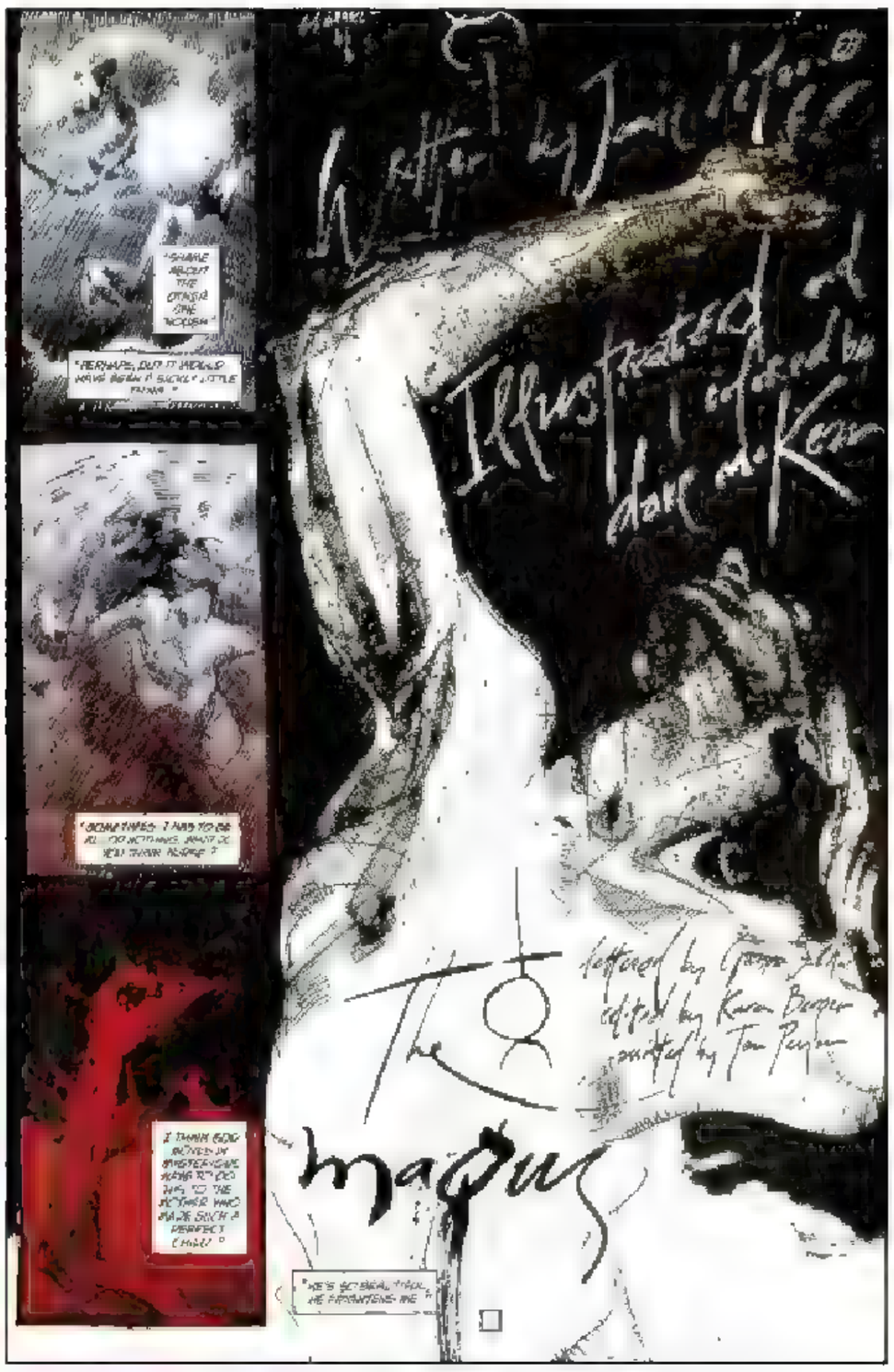
So how did Delano go about balancing *Hellblazer*'s far-out fantasy with his real-world concerns? "Even in that long-lost 'kinder, gentler world' of the early '90s," he replies, "it was always difficult to develop 'dark fantasy elements' in the book that could match the darkness of the real world which often preoccupied me, but I did my best to concoct some contorted allegories. Nowadays of course, it's practically impossible..."

Delano points out that, like all writers, his own experiences – in both life and art – helped define his work. "Inevitably, all writers are, to some extent, the product of their formative reading – so there may be detectable traces of everyone from RL Stevenson through Ballard and Burroughs to Moorcock and Nigel Kneale (to pick a few at random). At the time I was writing *Hellblazer* I was not consciously aware of any specific or overt influence, but retrospectively it has occurred to me that *Callan*, a '70s British TV series starring Edward Woodward, may have helped to set the general tone.

"There are characters who are part based on people of my acquaintance, although their traits and personal tragedies may have been subjected to considerable artistic licence; but to protect their memories and the sensitivities of any surviving relatives, and mitigate the potential for expensive law suits, I won't be too specific. I make no claim to any magical practice or insight – most of the metaphysics in my *Hellblazer* writing is mackled together from scraps gleaned from cursory leafings through random encyclopaedias of arcana, and a fertile, often drug-fuelled, imagination."

Hellblazer would pave the way for other dark fantasy success stories – from the Vertigo titles that followed it, to TV shows, such as *Angel* and *Supernatural*,





featuring other occult investigators. What does Delano think of his book's legacy? "Well, I never set out to be a trailblazer, but if anyone found the pursuit of their own vision eased by my blind blundering into the thickets of nightmare, I'm glad to have been of service. But I don't accept any blame for any psychological damage thus incurred."

Delano certainly cannot be held accountable for director Francis Lawrence's infamous 2005 movie starring Keanu Reeves. "I did watch the movie," the writer confesses. "Once. I was left with the overall impression of two totally different characters sharing a name."

Since penning his last issue of *Hellblazer* (#40, April 1991's "The Magus", illustrated by Dave McKean), Delano has returned to Constantine's world several times, most notably in his 2010 graphic novel *Hellblazer: Pandemonium* (illustrated by Jock). But the writer says he's now content to leave the character in the hands of other comic creators. "I think *Hellblazer. Pandemonium* will most likely serve as my swansong. No regrets at all, and I'm proud of what I and a whole other bunch of talented, deranged bastards were able to achieve, but I'm in a different place now and doing different things."

Garth Ennis picked up where Delano left off, crafting such fan-favourite tales as "Dangerous Habits", "Fear And Loathing", "Damnation's Flame" and "Rake At The Gates Of Hell". Ennis was succeeded by, among other writers, Paul Jenkins, Warren Ellis, Brian Azzarello, Mike Carey and Peter Milligan – who created an alternate version of the character for inclusion in DC's *Justice League Dark*. It is this incarnation that stars in the current ongoing *Constantine* comic book, which replaced *Hellblazer* after its 300th and final issue in February 2013.

Now the supernatural sleuth is poised to win a new legion of fans through the medium of TV. The weekly *Constantine* show debuts in October, starring Welsh actor Matt Ryan (*Criminal Minds: Suspect Behavior*), Lucy Griffiths (*Robin Hood*), and Harold Perrineau (*Lost*). Its pilot is directed by Neil Marshall (*The Descent*) and scripted by executive producers David Goyer and Daniel Cerone (*Dexter*).

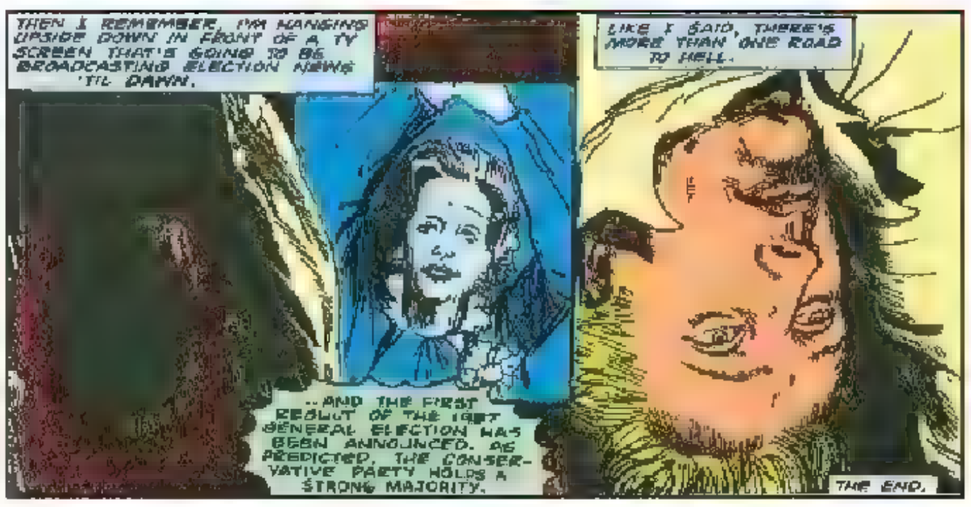
Delano is cautiously optimistic. "A TV series," he says, "should, by its nature, allow much more opportunity to demonstrate depth of character and breadth of theme. And audiences have now demonstrated they have both intelligence and stamina enough to engage with long and complex televisual storytelling. So I'm not totally without hope. On the downside, I understand they are referring to him as ConstantEEn as opposed to the original ConstantYne – as in the rebranded DCU incarnation of the character. That said I have deliberately refrained from watching the trailers so far, precisely so I can avoid the necessity to offer an opinion.

"I wish the creators luck in their endeavour," adds Delano, "and trust they are fully cognisant of the heavy psychic risk incurred by any who take John Constantine's name in vain." CH

"It was always difficult to match the darkness of the real world"

Jamie Delano's latest novel, ***Leepus: DIZZY****, was released in April,* *www.lepusbooks.co.uk*

Below: Delano was no fan of Margaret Thatcher who made frequent cameo appearances


THEN I REMEMBER, I'M HANGING UPSIDE DOWN IN FRONT OF A TV SCREEN THAT'S GOING TO BE BROADCASTING ELECTION NEWS 'TIL DAWN.
LIKE I SAID, THERE'S MORE THAN ONE ROAD TO HELL.
...AND THE FIRST RESULT OF THE 1987 GENERAL ELECTION HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED. AS PREDICTED, THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY HOLDS A STRONG MAJORITY.
THE END.

JUDGE JAMES'S COMICS COURTROOM

Amazons Attack! A wondrous celebration of female warriors or Wonder Woman's least wonderful hour? **Judge James Lovegrove** presides...

PROSECUTION: **Usually, m'lud, the cases we try in this courtroom are historic in nature, some dating back as far as 50 years ago. In the dock today, however, is an offence which occurred relatively recently, in 2007. I refer to DC's *Amazons Attack!* crossover, which was centred around a six-issue miniseries with tie-ins to four other titles, namely *Wonder Woman*, *Catwoman*, *Teen Titans* and *Supergirl*. The plot deals with the invasion and demolition of the United States by a superpowered hostile force, and is not to be confused with that year's *World War Hulk*, which had much the same basic theme but differed on two significant counts, in that it was both critically acclaimed and commercially successful.**

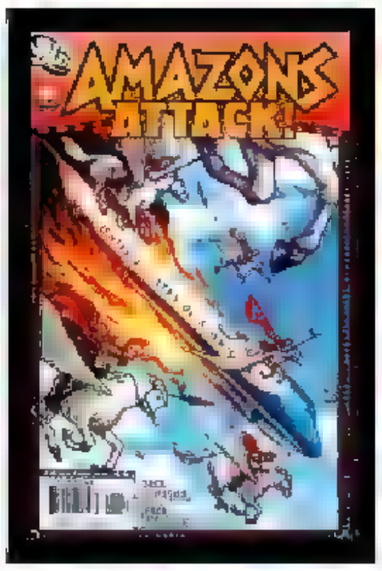
DEFENCE: If my learned friend is attempting to cast aspersions on *Amazons Attacks!* by implying that it plagiarised the Hulk crossover, he should know – as I'm sure he does, if he has done his homework – that it was originally devised as part of the run-up to 2005's *Infinite Crisis* but then temporarily shelved. Marvel, perhaps, is the imitator here.

PROSECUTION: **The counsel for the defence is being disingenuous, in as much as he is perfectly well aware that the original *Amazons Attack!* concept saw Wonder Woman's home island, Themiscyra, under assault by the US military, not the other way round. In the version that eventually saw the light of day, an angry Queen Hippolyta unleashes her troops on Washington, DC, believing that her daughter Princess Diana is the captive of the Department of Metahuman Affairs and is being tortured in order to give up the secrets of the Amazons' healing device, the Purple Ray. It turns out that Hippolyta is under the malign influence of the witch Circe, who is herself being manipulated by the goddess Athena, who in the end is revealed to be sinister Apokaliptian matriarch Granny Goodness in disguise. It is, to say the least, rather complicated.**

DEFENCE: Sophisticated and multi-layered, I think my learned friend means. What unfolds is a brutal, bloody, no-holds-barred battle, female warriors armed with swords, javelins, spears and bows pitted against America's high-tech war machine and a smattering of A-list superheroes. This results in the thrilling sight of jet fighters being brought down by a single arrow to the pilot's throat and the President's plane, Air Force One, under siege in mid-air by warrior women riding winged horses. It's all conveyed, in the core miniseries, by excellent, clean artwork from Pete Woods that has a touch of Bryan Hitch and Kevin Maguire about it.

PROSECUTION: **I won't deny that – wobbly facial anatomy aside – Woods's style is pleasing, but what he is required to illustrate is bland, crass and sometimes downright distasteful. The opening scene sets the tone for what is to come. A father and son are visiting the Lincoln Memorial. Amazons teleport in, accompanied by giant Cyclopes, siege catapults and magical riding lions. The father is decapitated in front of his son, who is then himself summarily dispatched. The Amazons slaughter countless other civilians and almost manage to assassinate the President but are thwarted by the timely arrival of Black Lightning. "JLA monitor duty is rarely this exciting," Black Lightning quips, a line which scripter Will Pfeifer likes so much he has the character repeat it almost word for word in issue #2.**

DEFENCE: There is widescreen action aplenty, as my learned friend so rightly points out, but there are also intimate, personal scenes, such as when Hippolyta's two most trusted generals, Artemis and Phillipus, discuss whether or not to rebel against their monarch. There are moments of intrigue, too, such as when shapeshifter Nemesis exposes



> **Circe's child was taken from her, so she is entitled to have an extinction-level hissy fit**

another shapeshifter, Everyman, who is impersonating Nemesis's superior in the DMA, Sarge Steel. Pfeifer attempts to depict both the practical and emotional cost of warfare.

PROSECUTION: It remains hard to believe that the Amazons would throw away their pacifist principles just on their leader's say-so and go on the rampage through "Man's World", let alone kill defenceless children. Even when it is revealed that their rival sister-race – ruthless mercenaries known as the Bana-Mighdall – is behind some of the worst atrocities in the conflict, the Amazons don't repudiate them. On the contrary, the two factions end up joining forces against their human enemy. This is surely not what William Moulton Marston intended when he dreamed up Wonder Woman as a progressive, feminist icon all those decades ago.

DEFENCE: Circe, as villain, at least has a valid, credible reason for stirring up hostility against humankind: her daughter was stolen from her by men, and the gods connived in the kidnapping. She is wreaking her vengeance against both mortals and immortals, and against the Amazons too.

PROSECUTION: That is a male writer's idea of motivation appropriate to a female. Her child was taken from her, so she is entitled to have an extinction-level hissy fit. Circe's self-justifying rant about the loss of her daughter is one of the crossover's many unintentionally funny moments, foremost among which is the now-famous line delivered by Batman as he kneels beside Nemesis, who lies near death, having been stung by one of the Amazons' swarm of "Stygian killer hornets". Grimly the Dark Knight intones: "A deadly bee weapon... Bees. My God."

DEFENCE: *Amazons Attack!* was in part designed to draw attention to certain second-string DC titles in the hope of raising their profile and sales figures. And surely you have to agree that that's a noble aim?

PROSECUTION: But instead it had the effect of lowering them, which is virtually unheard-of for a crossover event. The main trouble is that the core miniseries is all but incoherent and cannot be read in isolation, which is surely a prerequisite in this kind of enterprise. The majority of the crucial incidents happen elsewhere, in the tie-in titles. Characters come and go, acting inconsistently and often in a manner contradicting their own stated intentions in a previous issue. One moment Wonder Woman refuses to go and fetch the antidote which will save the dying Nemesis; the next, she goes back on her vow and does exactly that.

DEFENCE: It's a woman's prerogative to change her mind, of course.

PROSECUTION: Clearly my learned friend has missed the entire point of Wonder Woman. Perhaps he should consider enrolment in a sexism awareness course...?

CLASH OF THE COLOURISTS

Generic Man, meet your three colourists...

Here at *Comic Heroes* we don't think colourists get the credit they deserve. But rather than blithering on about it, we thought the best way to illustrate our point was to illustrate it!

So we asked the ever-helpful Mike Perkins to whip us up a piece of line art for three different colourists to each have a go at. He came up with the idea and name Generic Man, and here he is in his naked glory.

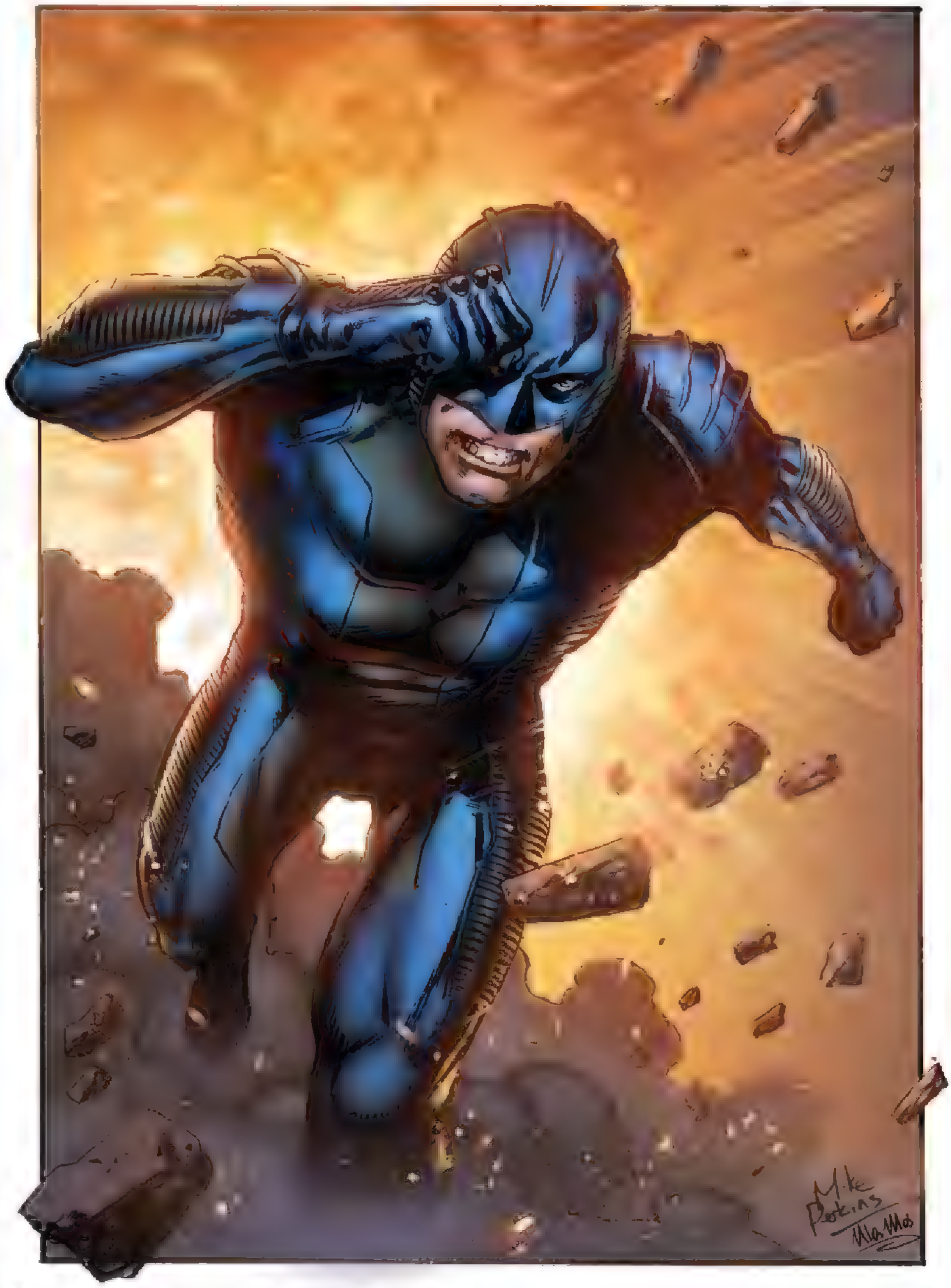
Over the next few pages we have the coloured results. And while initially they may appear fairly similar, the more you look, the more fascinating and revealing the differences become...

FRANKIE D'ARMATA

The man Brian Michael Bendis specifically asked for as colourist on his run on *The Avengers*, D'Armata made his comics debut at Top Cow before becoming one of Marvel's top colourists. His impressive CV includes *House Of M*, *Original Sin*, *Uncanny X-Men* and *Captain America*.

FRANKIE D'ARMATA SAYS: "I wanted to do a semi-classic fireball explosion, with a little action, and use some non-traditional colours for the costume to get away from the yellow, red and blue; something a little more in tune with the times. And relatively simple rendering, so as not to overwork it."

ULA MOS



Urszula "Ula" Mos is the premier cover colourist for Zenescape Entertainment's *Grimm Fairy Tales* comics, and has also worked extensively in the games industry.

ULA MOS SAYS: "I used warm (red, yellow) and cold (blue, pink, cool grey) colour palettes to create a contrast between the explosion in the background, and the superhero who barely avoided it. Additionally, cold colours in the foreground create the illusion of the character being in a shadow and closer to the viewer. The explosive fire is always quite a challenge. You need to find the balance between bright light and darker elements of line art, so they all create the illusion of something very hot and dazzling. I like adding details that emphasise mood, so I used cinder particles in the foreground."

PETER DOHERTY

Doherty has worked for *2000 AD* – he's enhanced Judge Dredd on many an occasion, including in the classic "Bury My Knee At Wounded Heart". More recently he's been working with Mark Millar and Frank Quitely on *Jupiter's Legacy*, and with Millar and Duncan Fegredo on *MPH*.

PETER DOHERTY SAYS: "The explosion is the brightest element in the picture, so I decided to make that the warmest part and, for contrast, to make the foreground figure much cooler. To soften the contrast, I played around with a few highlights on the figure where the light's catching him, and some colours over the top of the linework to integrate the foreground and background while still keeping them distinct. There's not much rendering to do as Mike's drawing already has a great sense of volume; the trick is not to flatten that with the colour. I think that's what I achieved anyhow!" CH

1 CAMPBELL GALLERY

PUNISHER MAX
THE HUNTED

"I'm probably known for drawing *Punisher Max* more than anything for Marvel. After pencilling an issue of *Wolverine* I was offered a *Punisher Max* one-shot before going on to draw an arc of the *Max* series. *Punisher Max* one-shot 'The Hunted' was the first time I'd inked myself; this was a huge jump in my artwork and I've never looked back. I thank Axel Alonso for that. A collection of my *Punisher* one-shots are in the *Punisher Max: Naked Kills* trade paperback."

THE ART OF...

LAURENCE CAMPBELL

His shadowy, scratchy style is a perfect fit for the edgier end of comics. Laurence Campbell tells Joel Hunslow why he's always been drawn to the dark side...

2 CAMPBELL GALLERY

5 RONIN
INTERIOR PAGE

"*5 Ronin* was a five-issue miniseries, written by Pete Milligan, featuring Marvel superheroes reimagined as characters in feudal Japan. I'm a big fan of Pete's work but I was also drawn by the other artists working on the series, such as Tom Coker and Goran Parlov. Each artist was given a different character and I was given the Punisher. The Punisher in this was a Ronin seeking revenge."

ARTIST PROFILE

British artist who puts a new twist on classic American line art

London

www.getcampbell.com

Beginning his career drawing for US indie publisher Caliber, Campbell really put his name on the comic map while working for Rebellion on strips such as *Judge Dredd*, *Bison* and *Synnamon*. Since then, he has gone on to draw for Marvel on *Wolverine*, *Punisher* and *Moon Knight*, and he's been the artist on *Hellboy*'s acclaimed spin-off *BPRD* since 2013.

Comic Heroes: You trained at Central St Martins – how much did this help you as a professional artist?

Laurence Campbell: "I'd already worked as a graphic designer (while attending the London Cartoon Centre in the evenings) before going to art college so I already had a professional approach. Art college really helped me to expand my horizons. It gave me the opportunity to experiment and it meant that I wasn't afraid to make mistakes. I also got to look at other artists outside the field of comics. I continued to read comics while at art college but I'd only draw comics in my spare time; I didn't let them affect my college work. I purposely kept the two separate. Although my artwork at college was still illustration, it was more experimental and photography-based. I guess artists like Dave McKean blurred the boundaries between formal comic art and formal illustration and I was influenced and inspired by that. I was reading *Cages* [Dave McKean's award-winning limited series, later collected as a single volume] and a lot of Vertigo comics while I was at art college."

CH: Your first professional work was for Caliber Comics. How did that come about?

LC: "While I was at art college, in my spare time I was drawing a comic called *Something Inside* written by Paul Carstairs (who had done a few *Future Shocks* for *2000 AD*). Looking back, I was influenced by *Hellblazer*. It was a real learning curve for me, being the first time I had pencilled, inked and lettered (about 30 pages). This was around the time of Vertigo, *Deadline* and *Crisis*. Self-publishing was too expensive at that point and not everyone had a computer, printer and scanner. We sent it off »

AUGUST BREGGAN
18216375 743 44B
ETHEL ARWALNO
49 OKTALTEN
ZOSSLA, NY

3 CAMPBELL GALLERY

BPRD
COVER #120

"I've been lucky enough to be asked to do covers for *BPRD*. This was the first and something I never thought I'd have the opportunity to do. With this cover I used the dog tag as a graphic element to show the present day and the past, an element in the story arc. I also had the chance to draw teenage Hellboy, which was both very cool and terrifying."

4 CAMPBELL GALLERY

BPRD
ISSUE #108

"This page is from my first arc on *BPRD*, which is called 'Wasteland'. I love drawing *BPRD* – John Arcudi and Mike Mignola write a really strong story. For me the mixture of drawing monsters, military hardware and characters that really develop is very appealing. In this scene, the BPRD team is fighting off monsters through a mist. A young boy has lost his father who has been protecting him – what he doesn't realise is that his father, who is stood behind him, has turned into a monster as well."

to a few publishers in the UK and didn't hear anything, so we tried sending it to America. Caliber picked it up and printed it as a one-shot. I continued to get work from Caliber; a couple of short stories for *Negative Burn* to begin with and then it developed from there."

CH: You've also drawn *Judge Dredd* for *2000 AD*. Did you read *2000 AD* as a kid?

LC: "Yes. As a kid I was reading *Starlord* and I joined *2000 AD* when the two merged. I can still remember what sticker I got with the first issue of *Starlord*. 'The Day The Law Died' story arc in *Judge Dredd* had a huge impact on me. The image of Judge Dredd having been shot in the head, face covered in bandages, riding the lawmaster was very iconic to me. The whole thing, Judge Cal, the Kleggs etc, really set this world up for me. I was buying black-and-white reprints of Marvel Comics beforehand, and *2000 AD* felt a little more dangerous and a bit more out there."

CH: Judge Dredd is such an iconic character – how did you approach drawing him?

LC: "*Judge Dredd*, written by John Wagner, was the first thing I drew for *2000 AD*. Looking back, I think I was a bit intimidated but it was a great way to start. Every time I've drawn Dredd, I feel like I've got to know him a little bit better. *Judge Dredd* has got such a history with such iconic artists and it took me a while, but I feel like I put my own stamp on him in the *Judge Dredd Fallout* collection. Myself and Rob Williams have a *Dredd* arc that we'd like to do at some point which really excites me and hopefully at some point we'll get a chance to pitch it."

CH: You've worked for both UK and US publishers. How different is it?

LC: "In the UK I've only really worked with *2000 AD* and they seem to be a bit more 'hands off' than the US publishers. For the US, I send work in at each stage – layouts, pencils and inks – whereas for *2000 AD* I just sent in final inks. I enjoy working both ways. I also enjoy getting feedback from the writer, although this doesn't always happen. I like it when the artist and writer work well together – I think it shows in the work. The storytelling part is very important to me."

CH: You've drawn a number of less traditional heroes such as the Punisher, Judge Dredd and the members of BPRD. Why do you think you're drawn to the darker side of comics?

LC: "I've always liked the darker side of comics. From liking Wolverine as a kid and thinking Orlok was pretty cool in *Judge Dredd*. At Marvel I think I was much more suited to the street-level type heroes and Axel Alonso, my editor at the time, realised this and put me on certain projects. Working on *Punisher Max* was tough but enjoyable. I liked the realism and the real emotional impact that the violence had on the characters. It made it feel a much deeper version of *Punisher*."

CH: You've also worked for Marvel, initially on *Wolverine* with Rob Williams. Was that a very different experience to working for Dark Horse?

LC: "Rob and I had worked together before on *Breathing Space* for *2000 AD*. We got on and seemed to work well together so we pitched a character to Marvel and Axel asked us if we wanted to do a *Wolverine* one-shot. Things developed from there. Dark Horse is a much smaller company and therefore feels a bit more intimate in some ways. Having said that, I developed some good relationships at Marvel, especially with Axel, who I learned »

BRICK
TAMLAN
BLOCK

a lot from. I've never worked for DC but I have a *Batman* itch that I'd like to scratch at some point."

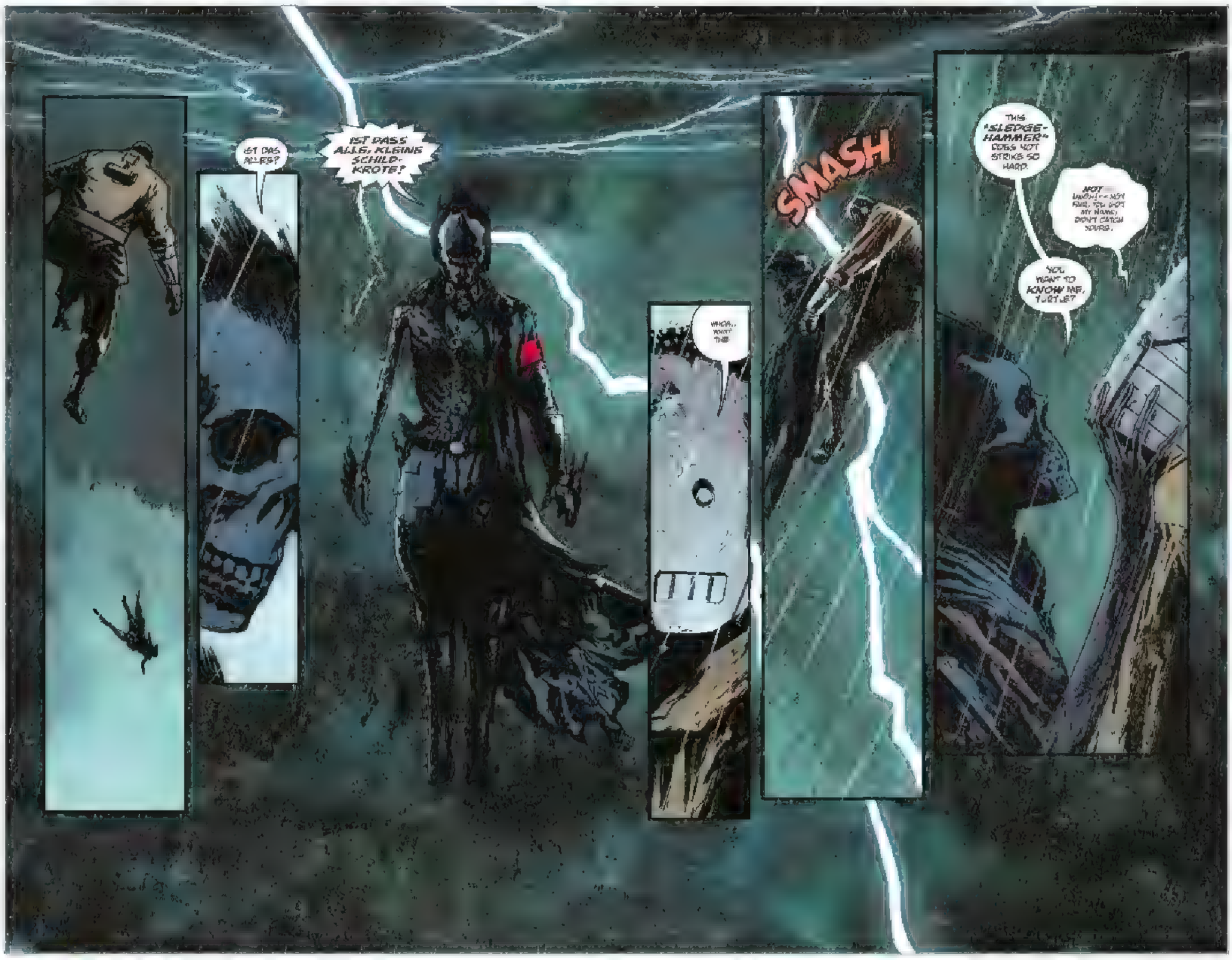
What are you currently working on?

"I'm working on *BPRD* for the foreseeable future and that's very exciting for me. It's a dream job. I work with great writers, great colourists, an enthusiastic editorial team and a continuing story with strong characters that is developing all the time. John Arcudi is a great writer, and when I first receive the scripts, I read them as a fan. I am a huge fan of *Hellboy* so the opportunity of working with Mike Mignola is fantastic. *BPRD* has some amazing artists working on it which makes me want to raise my game all the time. I feel like I've experimented with my work and I'm always looking to push it, which is a great feeling for an artist."

5 CAMPBELL GALLERY

JUDGE DREDD
DAY OF CHAOS: FALLOUT

"This is from the trade paperback *Judge Dredd, Day Of Chaos: Fallout*. This is the first story where I feel like I'm starting to draw Dredd in the way that I want to draw him. I have a lot of love for him, but Dredd's a tough character to get right."


IST DAS ALLES?
IST PASS ALLE, KLEINE SCHILD-KROTE!
SMASH
THIS "SLEDGE-HAMMER" DOES NOT STRIKE SO HARD.
NOT UNLESS I'M NOT FAST. YOU DON'T MY NAME, DON'T CATCH SQUIRE.
YOU WANT TO KNOW ME, TURTLE?

6 CAMPBELL GALLERY

SLEDGEHAMMER
ISSUE #44

"This is a double-page spread from *Sledgehammer* #44. The script required a really atmospheric scene – something I've been wanting to do for a while. This is the meeting of the Black Flame and Sledgehammer, fighting in the skies in World War 2 while lightning flashes and rain pelts down around them. John and Mike's script was pretty much all of the things I'd been wanting to draw and I have very fond memories of this story."

MEMORIES AND MEMOIRS

From war-torn Europe or Afghanistan to an idyllic Los Angeles a century ago, the French graphic novelist tells Paul Gravett how he turns his friends' memories into unforgettable memoirs

As Emmanuel Guibert turns 50 this year, three overriding goals have come to motivate him: "Making people, especially children, laugh, so that I can get back to the source of my love of comics and give kids all that I felt myself when reading my favourites; trying to capture life through reportage; and finally, collaborating with friends I get along well with but who are also very different from me, so they take me where I'd never go on my own."

The results are a vibrant diversity of projects and approaches from a natural collaborator, whether he is working as writer or artist with his fellow French comics creators, or with his close friends, transforming their memories into unforgettable graphic memoirs.

Born in Paris, Guibert enjoyed a blissful childhood and supportive parents, who nurtured his love of drawing. "One of the first words I spoke was 'pencil'." He grew up in southeast France in the Basses-Alpes, formerly part of Provence. "A lot of what I am doing now comes from the enthusiasm that filled my childhood, the idea that life is something to celebrate."

By the time he entered art school in Paris, he was already working as an illustrator and storyboard artist, so he decided to leave after six months. He was taken under the wing of Tanino Liberatore, co-creator of *RanXerox*. The virtuoso Italian artist introduced Guibert to his publishers, who commissioned him to develop a plot about the rise of Fascism in '30s Germany. So laboriously researched and hyper-realistically painted, Guibert's 48-page graphic novel debut *Brune* took him six draining years to complete.

DAILY DRAW

Where had his childhood passion for comics and drawing gone? Something had to change. Guibert set himself the daily task of making a fast observational drawing, to get to the essential. "I felt my drawing become more free, open up, move more easily into unfamiliar territory," he says. He also forced himself to experiment with unusual techniques, discovering processes he would use later. "It's my chronic dissatisfaction at being unable to reach a level of total confidence – which would actually be the height of boredom – that pushes me to keep on trying to find solutions."

The other big change was joining a studio of his peers, who became his mates and part of 'La Nouvelle Bande Dessinée', the new generation who re-energised French comics. In 1994 he met David B and through him was introduced into the Atelier Nawak, not far from the Centre Pompidou, and later the Atelier des Vosges, joining brilliant rising stars such as Joann Sfar, Lewis Trondheim and Christophe Blain.

The initial idea was simply a shared workplace but these studios soon became like a classroom without a teacher, for learning from and inevitably working with each other.

Guibert's collaborations included children's comedies about Sardine, a feisty pirate girl in space created by Joann Sfar, who drew more than 400 pages of them in *BDLire* monthly before Guibert took over the art as well. The pair swapped roles for other collaborations, each a different process. On *The Professor's Daughter*, a Victorian romantic burlesque between the leading lady and a resurrected British Museum mummy, Guibert experimented with washes and was closely involved in the writing, suggesting changes, scripting pages, working side-by-side with Sfar in the studio. First Second has translated this charmer along with six paperbacks of *Sardine*. In contrast, on their three episodes, so far, of *Les olives noires* ('*The Black Olives*') set in Judea in Biblical times, Guibert left Sfar's texts »

Opposite page: *The Photographer' Into War-torn Afghanistan With Doctors Without Borders* te s the story of French photojournal st Didier Lefèvre

We were in France. As far as I know, in Le Havre. The city had been completely destroyed.
We saw what the war had been like before we got there. At the time, of course, the Germans were far away.
The road was in very bad shape. The buildings on either side of us had been reduced to rubble.
No one could carry this much stuff. We tried to drag some of it behind us, but that was forbidden.
The sergeant often had us stop to rest. It was during one of those breaks that Stanley, the guy next to me, said
Well, Cope! We're not about to forget this February 19th!
Today's February 19th?
Yup.

Alors là, il s'est passé une chose absolument horrible pour moi
J'ai été pris d'une sorte de panique.
Au fond, je n'avais pas compris que j'allais me trouver sans ma mère si longtemps.
Je ne sais pas ce qui m'est passé par la tête mais je me suis mis en colère
TU NE DOIS PAS FAIRE ÇA !
Il le faut.

untouched and switched to a crisper brush technique. Guibert as writer also teamed up with cartoonist Marc Boutavant on the funny and tender *Ariol*, tales of your average everyday schoolkid donkey, secretly in love with Petula, the prettiest calf in the class. These are available in English from Papercutz.

PRODUCTION LINE

Guibert and company were making bande dessinée albums that were a world away from the precious, time-consuming, over-rendered tradition, one year or more in the making. Theirs were refreshing comics of populist entertainment, brimming with wit and panache and produced at a pace. Luckily these prolific creators had France's rapidly expanding market to supply. As Sfar urged Guibert, "Think of this as like making a B-movie. You can make books where you put in all you can, your whole life, but you can't spend 107 years on each one." Guibert heeded this advice; in 2002 alone he released no less than eight new titles.

Becoming part of this community also connected Guibert to the artist-run collective publishers L'Association, rebels against standardisation and champions of creative freedom. It was for their anthology *Lapin* that he started making a series of biographical vignettes.

In 1994, while on holiday on a small island off the French Atlantic coast, Guibert met the American ex-GI Alan Ingram Cope, aged 69. Though separated by nearly 40 years, Guibert struck up an intense friendship and spontaneous collaboration with this vivid raconteur, recording hours of his candid stories in his distinct foreign French. Over the next five years, Cope quickly grew to trust Guibert's visualisations, leaving the artist free to picture the veteran's life from tapes, letters, phone calls, family photos and the sketches he made, of Alan speaking and his surroundings. Occasionally Alan made drawings himself: "He'd draw me a little drawing if I asked him to specify something, like how his mess kit looked or how he held his machine gun."

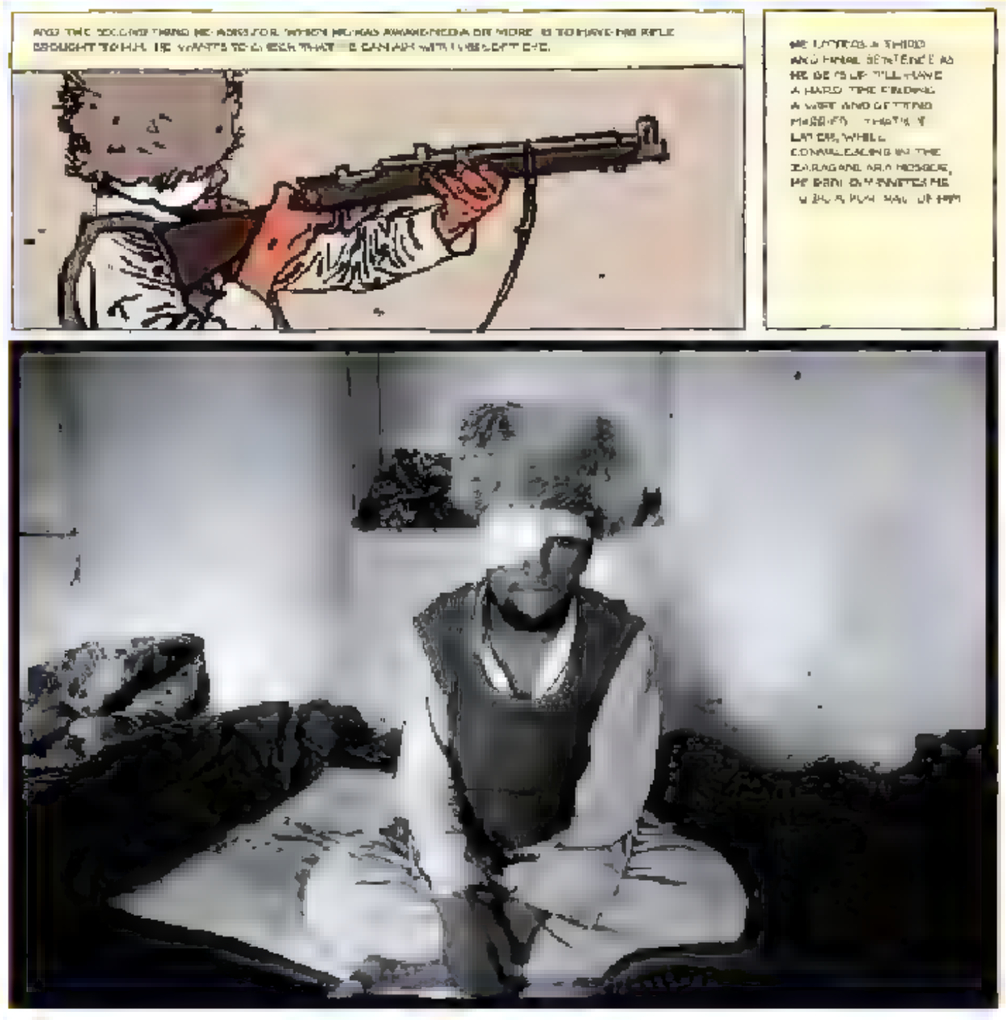
The 40 chapters and over 300 pages compiled into *Alan's War* offer no gung-ho glories of World War Two combat across Europe but pinpoint incidents of banality, incompetence, humour and horror, and above all Cope's quest for meaning. After contemplating the priesthood, his growing disenchantment with religion and shallow consumerism led to Cope quitting America in 1948, never to return. Late in life, he realised, "I hadn't lived the life of myself. I had lived the life of the person others had wanted me to be... And that person had never existed." Guibert illuminates this personal history in sepia, making the panels look like faded archival documents, with a grainy look evoking the wartime photographs of Robert Capa.

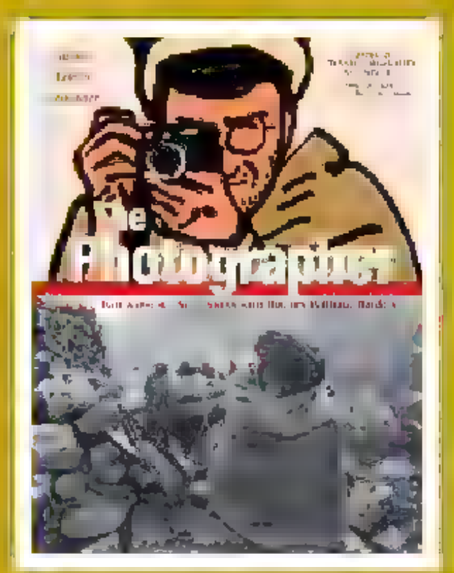
After his friend's death in 1999, Guibert found a way to reconnect to Cope by visiting friends and locations in America and Germany and through a photo album he left to him, reproduced at the back of the book. Committed to completing his visual chronicle, Guibert turned to Cope's account of his Californian childhood during the Great Depression, "probably the most intimate and beautiful part of what he confided to me". The first part is published in August by First Second as *How The World Was*, which Guibert launches at The British Library in London on August 16 and 17.

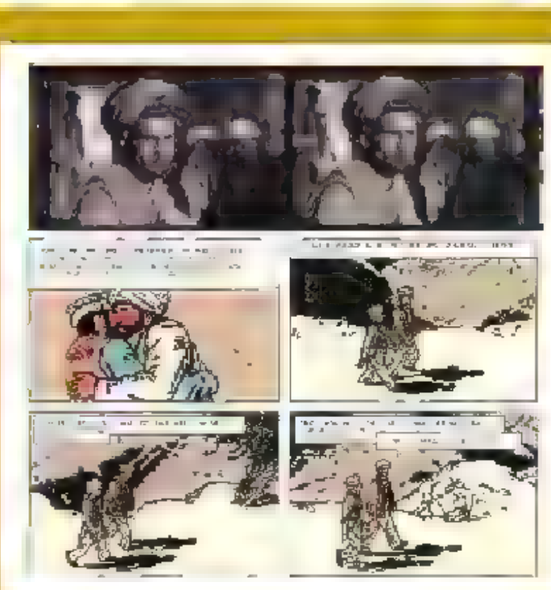
The book opens with flat-coloured vistas of present-day Los Angeles, cars speeding along freeways, in stark contrast to Cope's recollections of the forgotten city, before the smog and skyscrapers, when "the air smelled like lemons" and oaks and cedars lined the roads.

Above: *Alan's War* follows the life of ex GI Alan ngram Cope, wh e the hyper-realistic *Brune* above centre, charts the r se of Fascism in Germany

PUT IN A NEW ROLL OF FILM
JOHN GOES OUT OF THE BAKERY IN DEIR WITH A VILLAGER
WHAT DOES HE WANT
HE WANTS ME TO SEE HIS DAUGHTER. SHE HASN'T GOTTEN UP SINCE THE BOMBING


HE LISTENS A THIRD AND FINAL SENTENCE AS HE DIES. "I'LL HAVE A HARD TIME FINDING A WIFE AND GETTING MARRIED... THAT'S IT. LATER, WHILE CONVALESCING IN THE CARAVAN AREA HOSPITAL, HE DESCRIBES HIS





“It was like a still movie that was full of life, thanks to his words and photos”

As his family moves house 14 times, Cope shares small but telling moments, as well as some very private secrets and tragedies, one in particular that was too big for him to cry about. “I’m diving down deep to tell you this story, far beneath conscious memory.” Such was the meeting of minds between these two men that, in Guibert’s view, “In retelling Alan’s stories, I don’t feel I am serving any other story than my own. At the same time, it gives me that freedom to change one word into another. Whether he says it or I say it, it’s all become the same.”

WAR STORIES

In the late ’90s, Guibert undertook a testament to another life, that of French photojournalist Didier Lefèvre (1957-2007), a neighbour and passing acquaintance, always returning from one Doctors Without Borders mission and heading off on another. Guibert felt frustrated at not knowing him better. “I thought I’m passing beside a friendship without really living it.” So he asked the photographer to choose one mission and tell it to him. Lefèvre brought him box after box of contact sheets, like panels of a comic, to narrate a gruelling 1986 mission to Afghanistan. “It was like a still movie, that was full of life, thanks to this combination of his words, like a voiceover, and the photos I was looking at.”

Of these 4,000 photos, almost all were unpublished. Feeling this was an injustice, Guibert resolved to record Lefèvre’s story by making a book. This became three volumes of *The Photographer*, compiled into one in English by First Second.

With designer and colourist Frédéric Lemercier, Guibert integrated the black-and-white photos, intact, into the page layouts and brought them to life by juxtaposing Lefèvre’s narrative captions and Guibert’s connecting drawings of incidents that the camera had not recorded. The process helps the reader to understand what is happening in each shot, and what happened before and after. In one of the doctors’ house calls to a girl paralysed after a bombing, the room was too dark to take pictures. So Guibert draws the scene in silhouettes, lit by the examining doctor’s torch on his head, as he spots a tiny hole in her back. It was made by a piece of shrapnel “no bigger than a grain of rice” and she will never walk again. Lefèvre breaks down, unable to take more photos, but is jolted out of this by the mission’s leader who has just videotaped a child’s death. She tells him, “The mother said to me, ‘Film it, Jamila. People have to know’.”

Guibert may omit himself from his graphic biographies, but his presence is always felt on the page, the silent other half of the conversation, the listener, observer and translator of his friends’ lives. It’s a way of preserving and prolonging these friendships and enabling us, too, to befriend these remarkable individuals.

Above: Guibert’s striking, evocative art for *The Photographer* and Lefèvre’s harrowing photographs make for a powerful mix

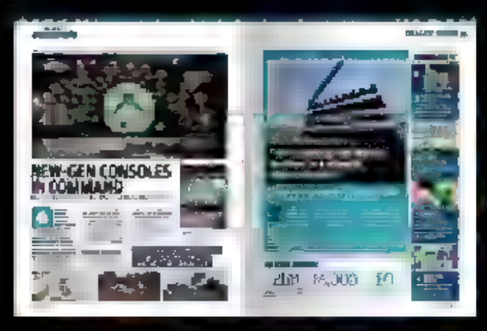
Guibert’s ***How The World Was*** *is on sale in August from First Second.*

GAMES MASTER PRESENTS

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO MINECRAFT

PC PS3 360 iOS ANDROID

ON SALE NOW!



NEW NEXT-GEN INFO!

TAKE ON ANYTHING!

GET MORE FROM YOUR GAME!

THE BEST GEAR AND CULTURE!

IN PRINT • ON IPAD • ON IPHONE

Find it in the GamesMaster app Available on the App Store or download via Zinio.com zinio

SIDEKICK

COMIC HEROES

THE BEST NEW COMICS PREVIEWED INSIDE!

IN ASSOCIATION WITH SELF MADE HERO

WWW.SELFMADEHERO.COM

GRANDVILLE: NOËL

CHRISTMAS COMES EARLY WITH THE COMPLETE PROLOGUE TO THE NEXT GRANDVILLE GRAPHIC NOVEL

DR GRORDBORT

SPIFFING STEAMPUNK ADVENTURES FROM WETA

MOORCOCK'S ELRIC

THE RUBY THRONE

Plus RICKY ROUSE HAS A GUN

CAP'N DINOSAUR

OLD-STYLE COMIC ACTION WITH A NEW TWIST

SIDEKICK

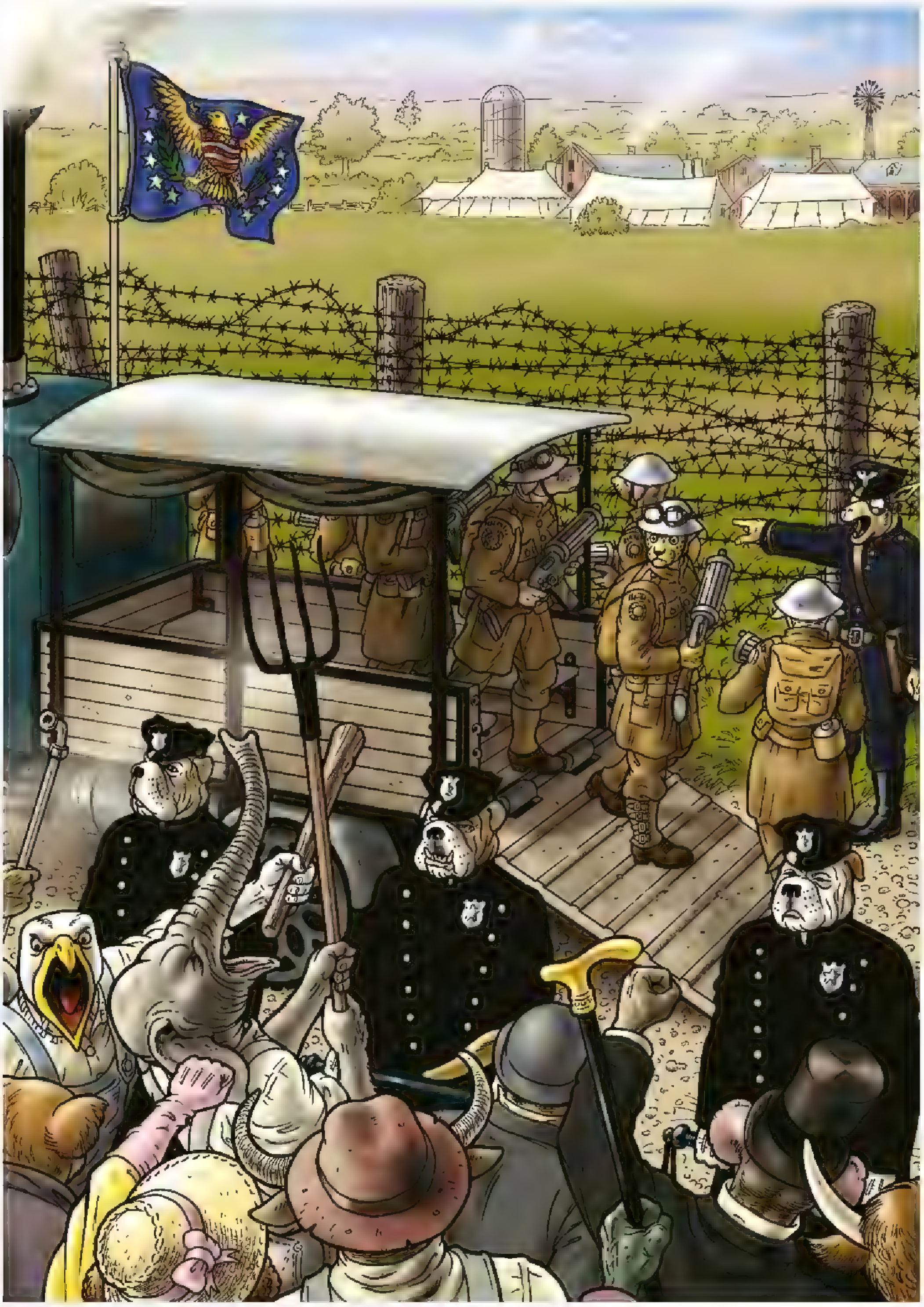
Grandville: Noël

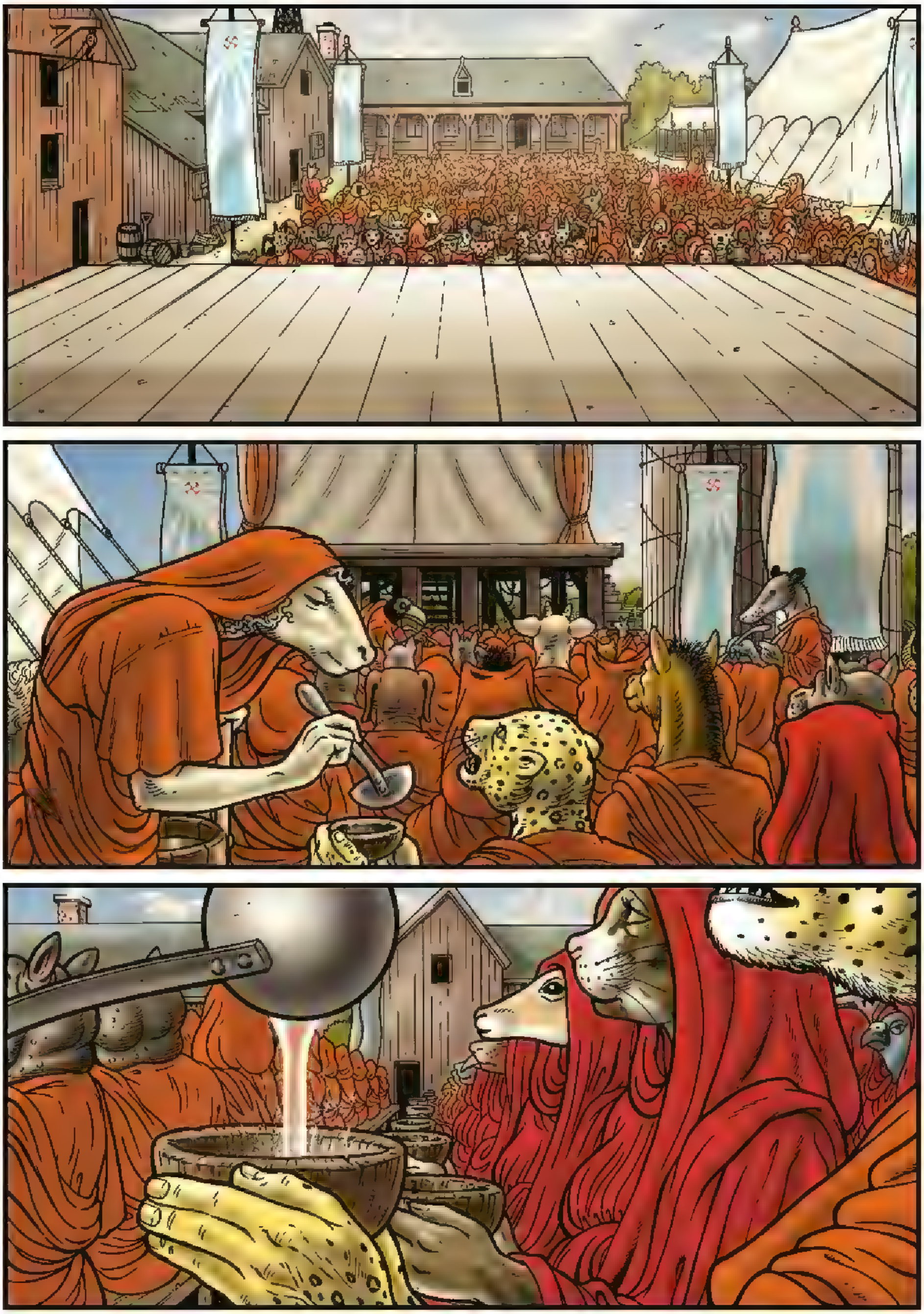
Writer/Artist: Bryan Talbot

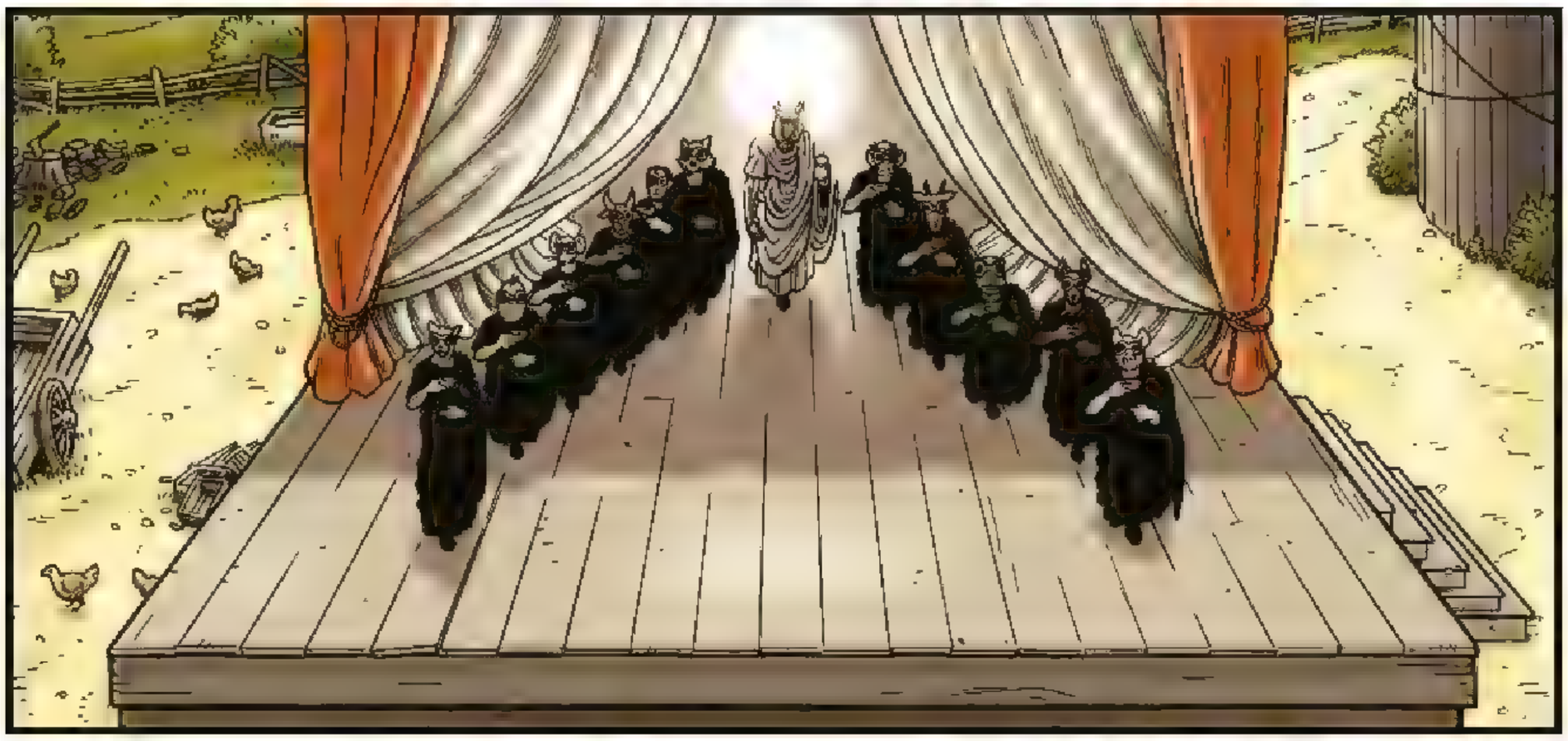
Bryan Talbot's stripy-snouted sleuth is back for a Christmas special but seasonal celebrations are shortlived as the grumpy detective finds himself on the trail of a religious cult led by a sinister unicorn messiah. Expect more steam-powered carriages, plenty of gratuitous violence and a menagerie of talking animals in this, the fourth volume of Talbot's steampunk detective thriller.

On sale in November from Jonathan Cape

All pages © Bryan Talbot







Brothers and sisters!
It is our time! At last! It is the time of the fulfilment of our glorious destiny!
Behold ye now the sublime form of our holy leader and harken ye to his sacred words!

Children of the Next Level.

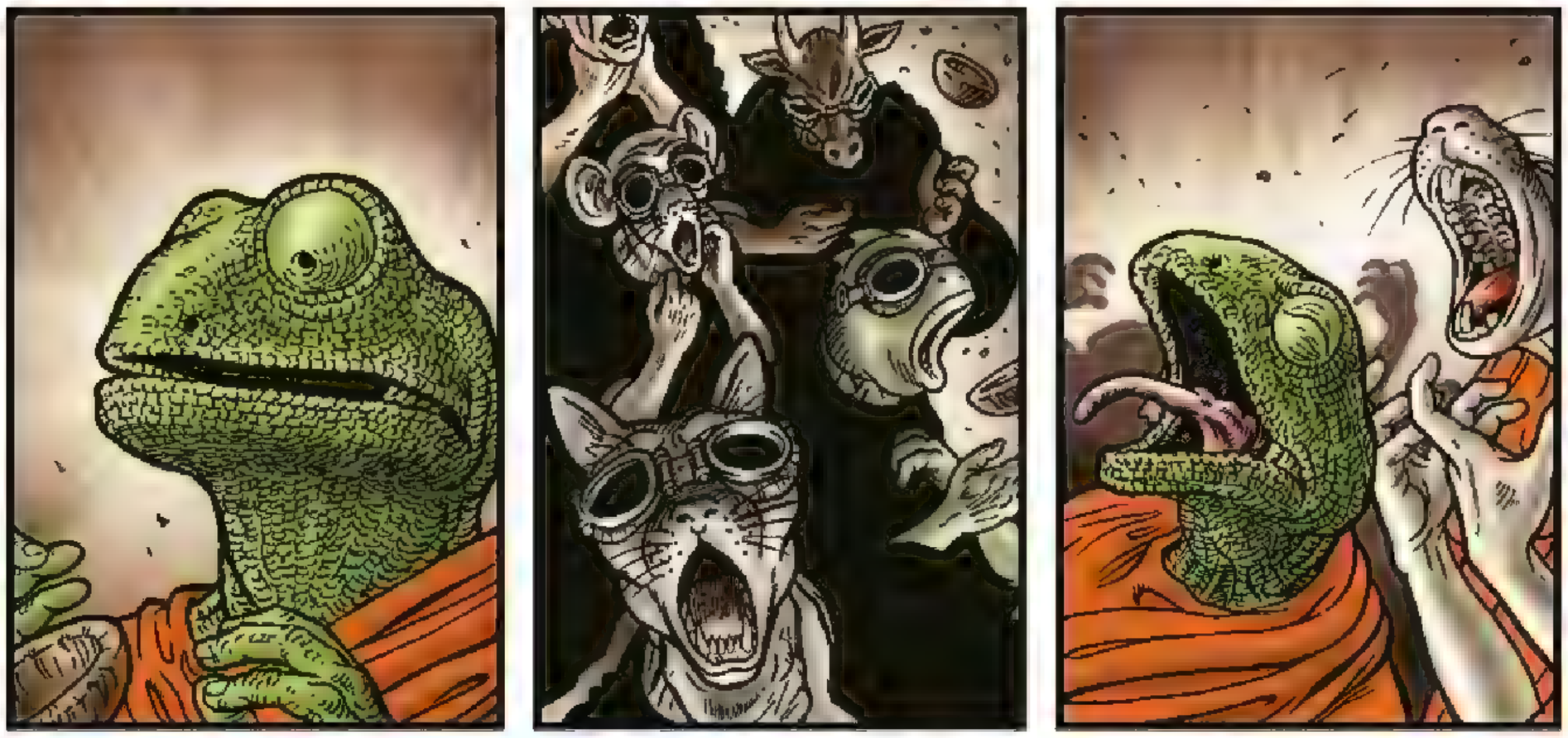
Be full of joy! As I evolved into my present blessed state, so now are you about to undergo your change and join with me in a pure state of perfect love.

Before the ranks of ignorance and repression that build outside our gates can come, together now we leave behind this corrupt world of sin and death.

We shed the empty vessels of our earthly forms and transmigrate in ecstasy into the stellar kingdom of the evolutionary soul. And of our astral journey take control.

Of pain, there shall be none.

Higher forms, come we now to join with you!



There's a couple still alive over there.

Not for much longer.

Good going, Doc! You only had one job and you managed to screw that up.

Where were the *rest* of the doves?

Couldn't get the other cage open quick enough. S'hard with these old fingers o' mine.

No, Nicholas. Don't be so hard on Doc. He does his best.

Come on. We have to leave

The skyship's all fuelled up and waiting to lift off. We going to try the *West Coast* this time? What's the destination?

The greatest city in the world.

Paris.

Grandville.

NATURE + TECHNOLOGY + SPACE + HUMANS + ENGINEERING

WHICH ANIMAL IS EVOLVING THE FASTEST?

WHO OWNS THE RESOURCES IN SPACE?

WHY DON'T BATTERIES LAST LONGER?

ASK US YOUR SCIENCE QUESTIONS ON TWITTER! @SciUncovered

FIND THE ANSWERS & MORE IN...

SCIENCE UNCOVERED

NEW MAGAZINE!

DISCOVER THE WORLD AROUND YOU

YOUR COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE SCIENCE THAT MATTERS. DISCOVER, UNDERSTAND, EXPLORE, EXPERIMENT.

LIMITED PRINT OFFER

SAVE 40% PAY £15.99 EVERY 6 MONTHS

www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/SCIX18

SPECIAL DIGITAL OFFER

2 FREE ISSUES FOR APPLE/ANDROID USERS

Search for Science Uncovered on your app store

Cap'n Dinosaur

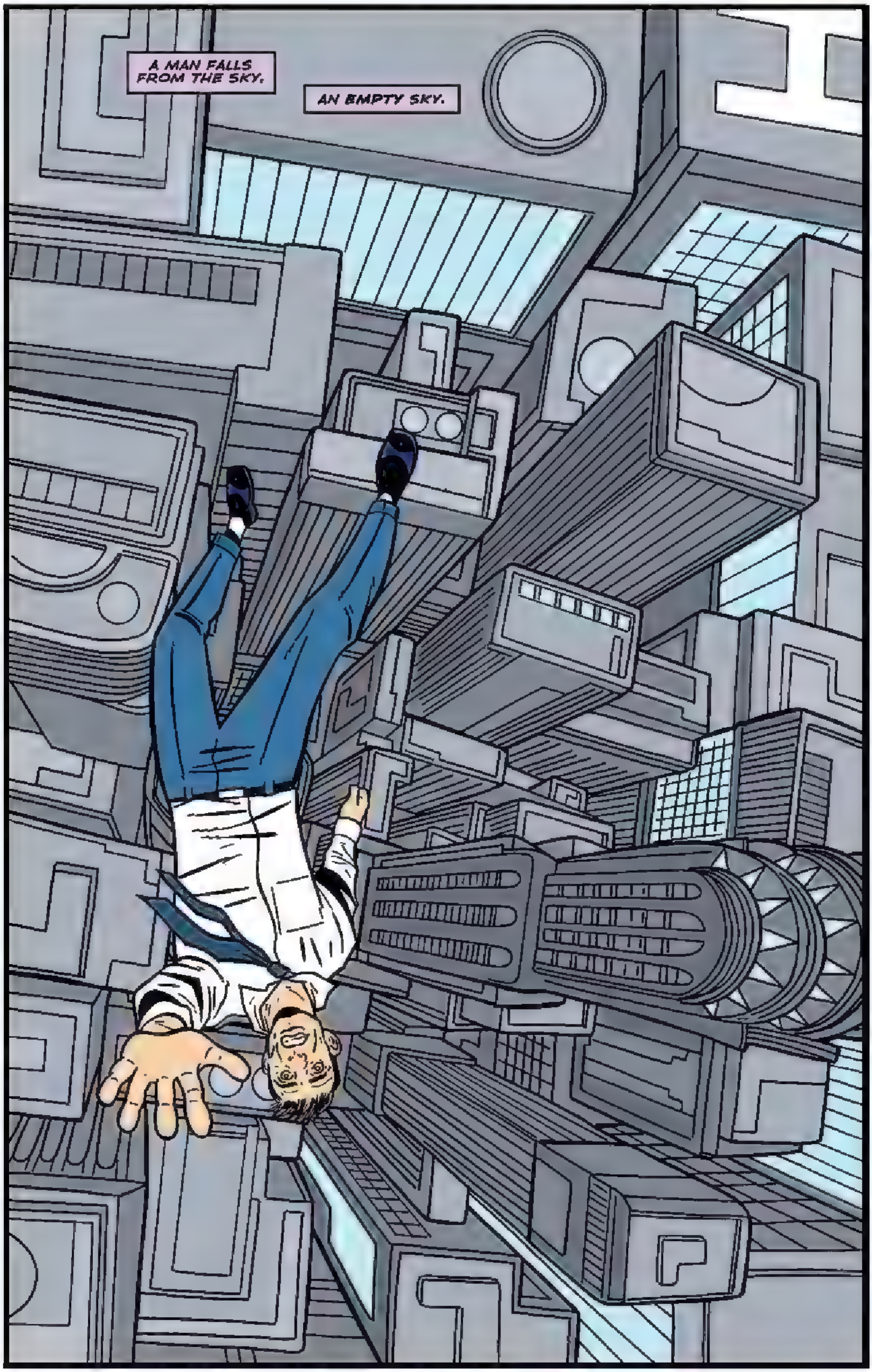
Writer: Kek-W

Artist: Shaky Kane

A complete, all-new, Cap'n Dinosaur tale from Kek-W (*2000 AD*) and *The Bulletproof Coffin*'s superbly-named Shaky Kane. A body plummets to the sidewalk and it's up to the Cap'n and Honey Moon to unravel the mystery behind the bloody mess...

Out now from Image Comics

All pages © 2014 Shaky Kane


A MAN FALLS FROM THE SKY.
AN EMPTY SKY.

GRAVITY TURNS HIM INTO MUSH. A SIDEWALK PANCAKE.
THAT'S WHEN PORTAL CITY PD PICK UP THE BONE-PHONE AND GIVE US A CALL.
AS MYSTERIES GO, THIS ONE'S A DOOZIE. IT TURNS OUT THE GUY'S LUNGS ARE FULL OF WATER.
POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS
POLICE LINE DO NOT CR

CAUSE OF DEATH: DROWNING.
NO ID, NO CLUES, NO EXPLANATION.
WHEN THE COPS ARE LEFT SCRATCHING THEIR HEADS, THEY REACH OUT...
PRESS
POLICE LINE DO N
OLICE
OSS

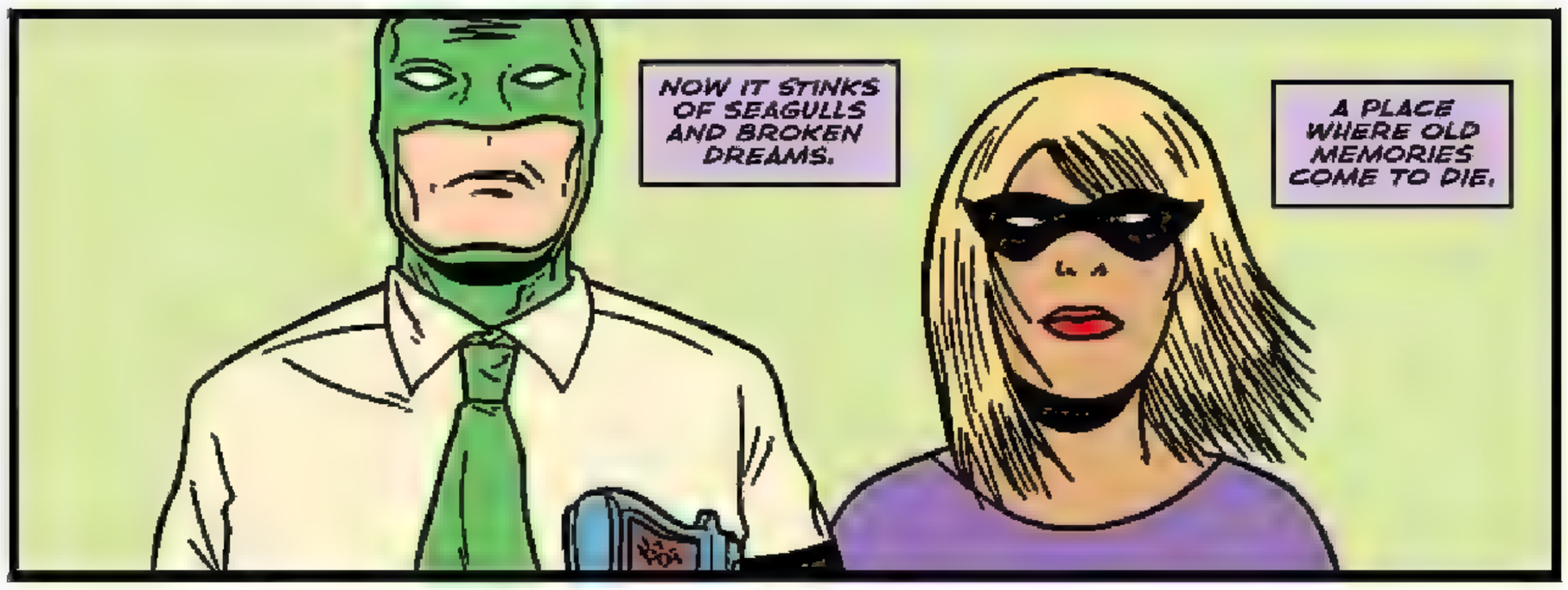
AND THAT'S WHERE WE COME IN.
UNSOLVED CRIMES ARE OUR SPECIALITY, MYSTERY THE FUEL THAT REVS OUR MOTOR.
CLUB HOUSE

ME AND MY PARTNER, HONEY MOON.
CAP'N DINOSAUR! THROUGH HERE, SIR.
POLICE LINE

WE'VE GOT AN EYE FOR DETAIL.

WE CAN SEE THE SMALLER PICTURE.
PALISADES AMUSEMENT PARK, N.J.
FREE RIDE
"CUDDLE-UP"

USED TO LOVE THIS PLACE WHEN I WAS A KID.
"PHONEY ISLAND," WE CALLED IT.


NOW IT STINKS OF SEAGULLS AND BROKEN DREAMS.
A PLACE WHERE OLD MEMORIES COME TO DIE.

Ricky Rouse Has A Gun

Writer: Jörg Tittel

Artist: John Aggs

A US army deserter who runs away to China finds himself in a knock-off Disney theme park greeting guests while dressed up as giant furry Ricky Rouse. Here's a taste of this bonkers, yet utterly brilliant action comedy, that promises to take a sideways swipe at both Western entertainment and the state of US-China relations.

On sale in September from SelfMadeHero

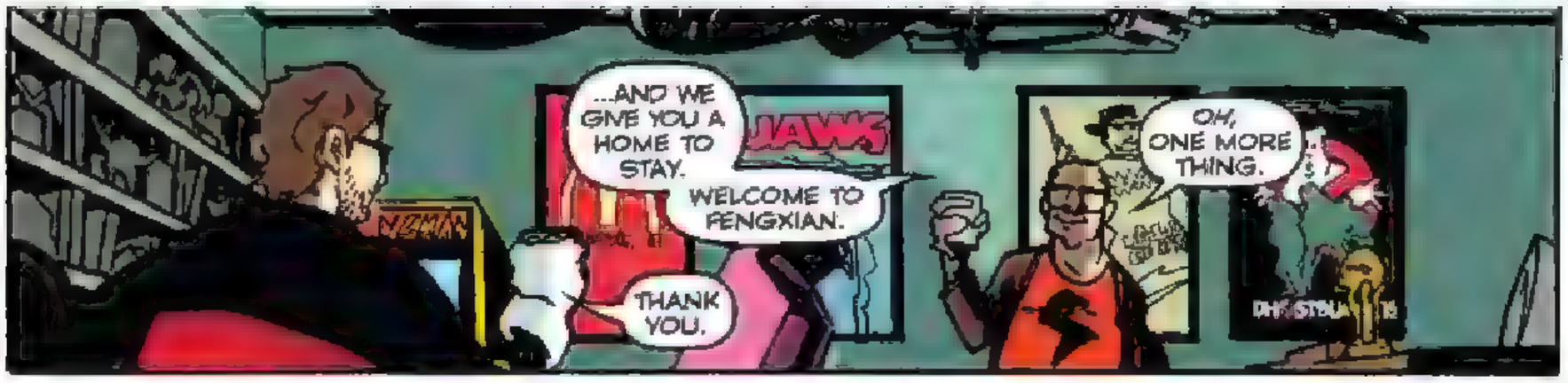
All pages © SelfMadeHero

I SUPERVISED THE DESIGN MYSELF.
AND I'VE BEEN TRYING HARD, VERY HARD,
TO FIND THE PERFECT NAME FOR HIM.
UNTIL I MET YOU.
RICHARD, MEET RICKY.
RICKY ROUSE.
YOU MEAN... RICKY... MOUSE?
NO, IT'S ROUSE.
RICKY ROUSE.
LIKE YOU.
THAT'S UH, I'M VERY FLATTERED. BUT PEOPLE WILL ASK. I MEAN,
WHAT'S A ROUSE?
WHAT IS A PARKER?
IT IS HIS FAMILY NAME. LIKE JOHN SMITH. OR PETER PARKER.
ALSO, THIS WAY WE DON'T CONFUSE PEOPLE.
WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, HE'S STILL A BIT OF A...
RIP OFF, DON'T YOU THINK?
RIP OFF?!

I TELL YOU WHAT IS A *RIP OFF!*
FOR HOLLYWOOD TO MAKE AND *REMAKE* THE *SAME* MOVIE TEN TIMES EVERY YEAR.
REMAKE *HERE*, SEQUEL THERE, LIKE THE PUBLIC HAS AMNESIA.
CHARGING FIVE DOLLARS MORE EACH TIME JUST FOR 3D.
THAT IS A RIP OFF.
THAT IS PIRACY.
THAT IS A *CRIME.*
THIS IS *RICKY ROUSE.* BUILT ON THE PAST, DESIGNED FOR THE FUTURE.
A CHINESE ORIGINAL. AND DON'T LET *ANYONE* TELL YOU DIFFERENT.
ONE MORE TIME!
FOREVER
BACK AGAIN
PREQUEL TWENTY ONE
REMAKE OF THE YEAR
THE PREMETRAPOLIS

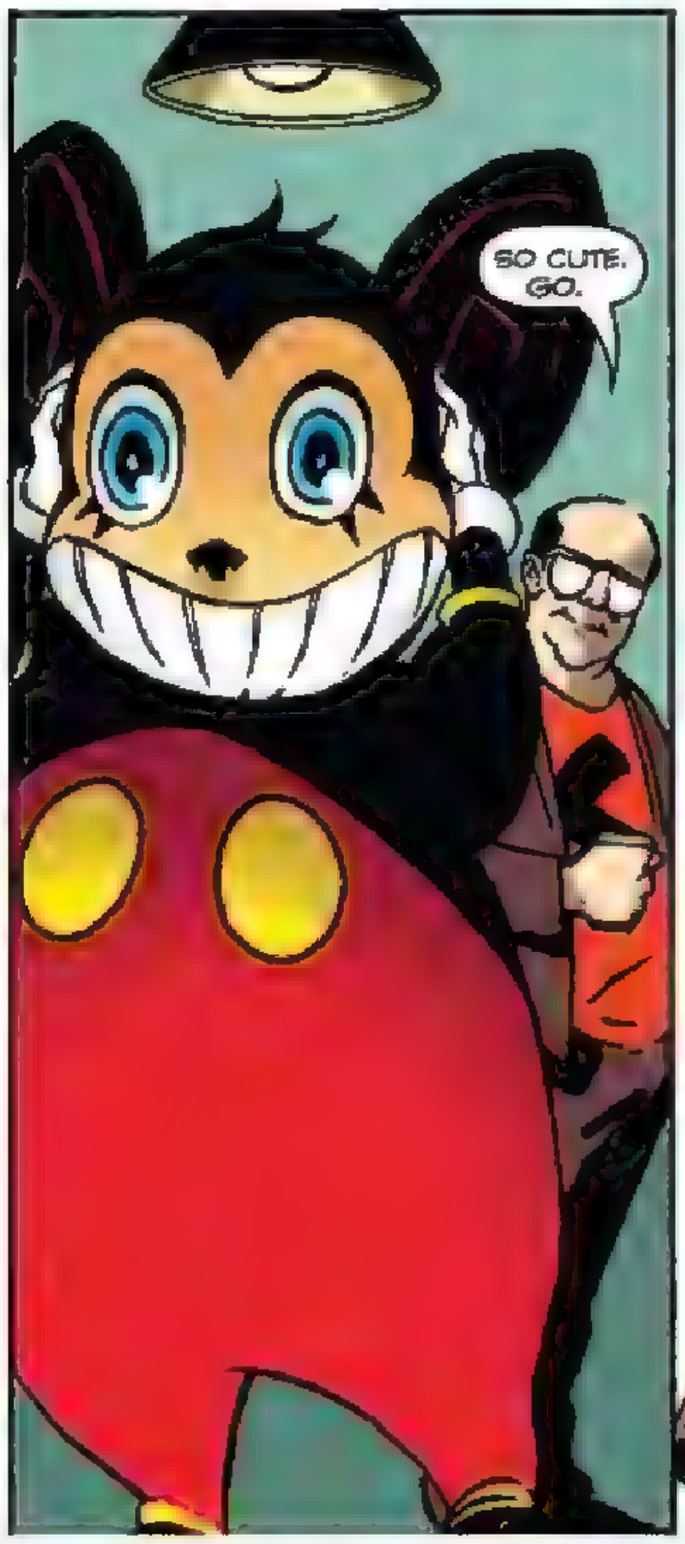
NO. YOU'RE RIGHT. HE'S RICKY ROUSE. WITHOUT A DOUBT.
TRY HIM ON.
ME?
YES. RICKY.
I THOUGHT YOU WANTED ME IN SECURITY?
I JUST PUT ARE UNDER FENG LUO'S BUTT.
MOTIVATION TACTICS. STEVE JOBS.
NOW... TRY IT.
SO? HOW DOES IT FEEL?
FINE, FINE. JUST. FINE.
I KNEW IT! IT'S OUR ONLY PROTOTYPE. BUT IT ALREADY FITS YOU LIKE A GLOVE.
THIS, AMERICAN BROTHER, IS YOUR DESTINY.
RICK, YOU WERE BORN TO BE A ROUSE.
IN YOUR NEW CAREER, YOU WILL GREET CUSTOMERS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TO CHINA'S NEWEST EXCITING AMUSEMENT PARK.
KIDS WILL BE SO LUCKY TO SPEND TIME WITH RICKY. YOU WILL BE THEIR BEST FRIEND.
HOW DO YOU SAY? A FAMILY FAVORITE?

AT FENGXIAN, EVERY EMPLOYEE IS LIKE FAMILY.
YOU GET GOOD FOOD...
...YOU MAKE GOOD FRIENDS...


...AND WE GIVE YOU A HOME TO STAY.
WELCOME TO FENGXIAN.
THANK YOU.
JAWS
OH, ONE MORE THING.

THE OLDEST SON OF THE MAYOR OF SHANGHAI, MR. HUANG, IS COMING ON CHRISTMAS DAY.
WE NEED TO IMPRESS HIM AND HIS STAFF.
AND HE WILL GET A *SPECIAL* HOLIDAY SURPRISE: *RICKY ROUSE.*
YOU HAVE NO PLANS FOR CHRISTMAS?

MY DAUGHTER--
GOOD.
NO PLANS, *SIR...*
COME. LET ME LOOK AT YOU AGAIN.


SO CUTE. GO.

GREAT. GOODNIGHT NOW.
FUCK!
WATCH YOUR HEAD. IT'S *PRECIOUS.*

Dr Grordbort Presents:
Onslaught

Writer/Artist:
Greg Broadmore

From the demented world of Dr Grordbort comes this bumper-sized slice of steampunk derring-do! Collecting the first three instalments in Greg Broadmore's retro sci-fi series, plus lavish new content, bonus features and a never-before-seen full-colour comic strip, expect oodles of space-faring action, spit-take humour, and more rayguns than an extra-terrestrial NRA meet!

On sale in September from Titan Comics

All pages © Titan Comics

LORD COCKSWAIN
in
The PSYCHIATRIST
I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME THAT I FELT AN EMOTION...
YES...
I WAS SIX YEARS OLD, AND I WAS CHASING BEES IN THE GARDEN.
SQUASHING THEM.
I LOOKED DOWN AT ONE OF THE LITTLE TIKES.
HALF ALIVE, HIS BIG EYES LOOKING UP PLEADINGLY...
GUTS SPREAD IN FRONT OF HIM LIKE A BEAN BREAKFAST.
AND I THOUGHT TO MYSELF...
"BLOODY HELL, MY FOOT HURTS!"

ERM... THAT'S NOT AN EMOTION, M'LORD...
THAT'S CALLED PAIN...
OH YES?
WELL, I DON'T LIKE THAT ONE MUCH.
WHAT ABOUT PRIDE?
DO YOU EVER FEEL A SENSE OF SATISFACTION IN YOUR WORK?
AFTER A COMPLETED MISSION, FOR INSTANCE?
OH YES, I GET THAT ONE.
AFTER I BLOW UP A VENUSIAN VILLAGE AND WATCH THE FIREBALL RISING, FULL OF LITTLE FLAILING BODIES.
I GET THAT ONE.
THAT'S AN EMOTION, IS IT?
AH... YES, SORT OF...

HOW ABOUT AFFECTION?
EFFECTION?
OH YES, I LOVE TO EFFECT THINGS!
NO, NOT QUITE...
IS THERE ANYONE FOR WHOM YOU MIGHT FEEL SOME... WARMTH? COMPASSSION? LOV--
WHAT'S THAT? GOOD LORD, MAN, PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER.
WE HAVEN'T BEEN IN THE JUNGLE THAT LONG.
SERVED IN THE NAVY FOR A SPURT, YOU KNOW?
ASK ME LATER... AFTER A FEW GINS.

NO, UM... YES, AH... LET'S CHANGE TACK.
REMORSE. EVER REGRETTED SOMETHING?
MAYBE YOU SPOKE TOO HARSHLY AND HURT SOMEONE ELSE'S FEELINGS?
EH?!
PERHAPS YOUR ACTIONS CAUSED SOMEONE ANGUISH OR LOSS?
OF COURSE. THAT HAPPENS.
I'M SUPPOSED TO FEEL SOMETHING THEN, AM I?
FASCINATING.

ERM...
REVERENCE. HOW ABOUT THAT?
AWE FOR THE MAJESTY OF BEING.
A FEELING OF INSIGNIFICANCE BEFORE THE FACE OF THE UNIVERSE?

I'M QUITE TALL, YOU KNOW?

THE BLOOD JUNGLE...
PUT A STOPPER ON IT FOR NOW, OLD BOY.

GOOD LORD, THE GILDED GRISTLEBACK!

Elric: The Ruby Throne

Writer: Julien Blondel

Artists: Didier Poli, Robin Recht

A stunning new comic adaptation of the classic Elric of Melniboné novels by Michael Moorcock. The ancient island of Melniboné has been ruled by Elric, the albino emperor, for millennia. Reliant on magic and herbs for his strength and prolonged life, Elric's grip on Melniboné is crumbling, as his people slide into decadence. Now his envious cousin Yyrkoon, Prince of Melniboné, plots to overthrow him and claim the Ruby Throne for himself!

On sale in September from Titan Comics

All pages © Titan Comics

YOUR LEGEND AND YOUR NAME WILL BE FOREVER INSCRIBED IN OUR MEMORIES...
THE WHITE WOLF...
THE PAWN OF GODS...
THE CHAMPION OF ARIOCH...
THE ASSASSIN OF YOUR PEOPLE...
NO MAN CAN EQUAL YOUR POWER... NO WOMAN IS WORTHY OF YOU...
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL QUEENS IN THE WORLD WILL GIVE ANYTHING TO DIE AT YOUR HAND...
...JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER DID BEFORE THEM...
THE GREATEST RULERS WILL FALL AT YOUR FEET, CURSING YOUR NAME...
JUST LIKE YOUR FATHER DID...

10

ELRIC...

SON OF SADRIC...

WELCOME TO THE WORLD, LAST EMPEROR OF MELNIBONÉ...

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE YEARS WITHOUT TENDERNESS...

LEARN TO SAVOUR THE TASTE OF BLOOD, LEARN VICE AND GREED...

LEARN JEALOUSY... TREASON, HATRED...

UNTIL YOU ARE READY TO CALL FOR ME...

BEG FOR ME...

CURSE ME...

WAIT FOR ME, MY LOVE...

BECAUSE SOON, WE SHALL BE REUNITED...

"JUST *LOOK* AT HIM, HUMMAH.

"IS THAT *REALLY* OUR EMPEROR -- THAT MAN YOU SEE SITTING ON THE RUBY THRONE?

"DO YOU *REALLY* SEE HIM AS A WORTHY DESCENDANT OF A LINE OF DRAGON MASTERS AND SORCERER-KINGS OF IMRRYR? OR IS HE JUST A SICK MAN, *SHOWERED WITH POTIONS* AND FED BY *PARCHMENT?*"

YOUR DRINKING CLOUDS YOUR MIND, *YYRKOON*... ELRIC MIGHT NOT BE A CONQUEROR, BUT YOU SHOULD NOT DOUBT HIS POWER!

THAT *ALBINO*? THAT *PHILOSOPHER*?! IS THIS YOUR IDEA OF POWER, THEN?

IS *THIS* WHAT MY COUSIN HAS TURNED US INTO?

"*THE GLORY OF MELNIBONÉ* WAS NOT BE FORGEDED IN THE HUSH OF LIBRARIES.

"BUT IN *THE BLOOD, THE TERROR AND THE TRAMPLED SOULS* OF ITS ENEMIES! IN THE PAST THE POWER OF OUR NAME ALONE WAS ENOUGH TO SHAKE KINGDOMS AND SHATTER EMPIRES!

"THE NAME OF MELNIBONÉ!"

ENOUGH!
LOOK AT WHAT WE HAVE BECOME! ALL WE'RE GOOD FOR ANYMORE IS DRINKING AND ENTERTAINING...
LIKE SOME COMMON HUMANS!
THIS COURTLY LIFE CONSUMES US...
IT'S HIGH TIME WE WAKE THIS PALACE FROM ITS SLUMBER, HAMMAH!
PRINCE YYRKOON! BUT...?!
THE HOUR HAS ARRIVED TO REMIND THE LORDS OF CHAOS THAT THERE ARE STILL TRUE MELNIBONÉANS HERE IN IMRRYR OF WHICH THEY CAN BE PROUD!
MY DEAR COUSIN! MY DEAREST SISTER...
I'VE COME TO PAY MY RESPECTS TO THE EMPEROR AND THE RUBY THRONE...
HOW TOUCHING YOUR LOYALTY GOES STRAIGHT TO MY HEART, YYRKOON...

13

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX PRESENTS

CREATE MANGA & COMIC ART IN **PHOTOSHOP, SKETCHUP, MANGA STUDIO 5** AND MORE!

MANGA ARTIST

13 HOURS OF FREE VIDEO

ROBO-TECH!
MECHA MAYHEM!
Discover the secrets to building amazing mechs

PHOTOSHOP
COMIC ART SKILLS!
Tricks with materials, sheets and page layouts

SHARPEN UP YOUR
MANGA SKILLS
Start creating better comics and characters today!

PRO ART GALLERIES
The world's leading stars share their art

MANGA ART TIPS
Genzoman reveals his art techniques!

ISBN 9781783890514

16 workshops from top artists including Genzoman, Jason Chan and Cris Delara will enhance your manga character art, mech design, comic layouts and more!

Available on the App Store
myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
WHSmith
BARNES & NOBLE

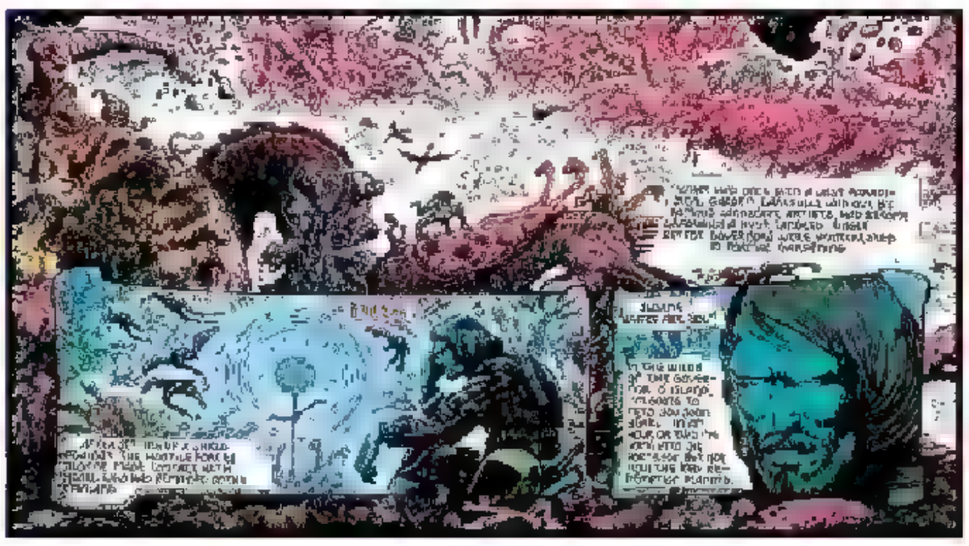
ON SALE NOW! http://beta.imaginefx.com/shop

THE VOYAGES OF LONE SLOANE

Comics don't get more singular, more French, or more oppressively unforgettable than Philippe Druillet's Lone Sloane tales, says **Matt Bielby**

Roger Dean – painter of weird alien landscapes for album covers by bands like Yes and Asia – was quite the name in the '70s, and his twin book imprints, Paper Tiger and Dragon's Dream, brought us album after album of the most exciting fantasy art of the period.

Alongside these, too, came the odd eye-opening album of Franco-Belgian bande dessinée. Now, a new group of artists who'd gathered at *Pilote* magazine – and who since had formed their own publishing house, Les Humanoïdes Associés, together with a new magazine, *Métal Hurlant* – were turning the world of comics upside down. Amongst the ringleaders were "Moebius" Giraud, and photographer-turned-artist Philippe Druillet, with his Lovecraftian themes, AE van Vogt influences, and striking, scratchy, occasionally baffling Baroque page designs.



Druillet's figures were often dwarfed by bizarre space-architecture, vaguely Euro-Gothic but equally often resembling Far Eastern temples.

Druillet's early works revolved around a red-eyed Han Solo-type called Lone Sloane, hero of a number of late '60s short stories and then a 1973 graphic novel, *Delirius*, created with writing help from pal Jacques Lob.

When the English translation was published by Dragon's Dream (the UK version contained the original *Les Six Voyages de Lone Sloane* tales, each around eight pages long, plus the graphic novel) it was like nothing we'd seen before: dark, inky, oppressive and thrilling. This was Gigeresque before Giger had even entered the zeitgeist.

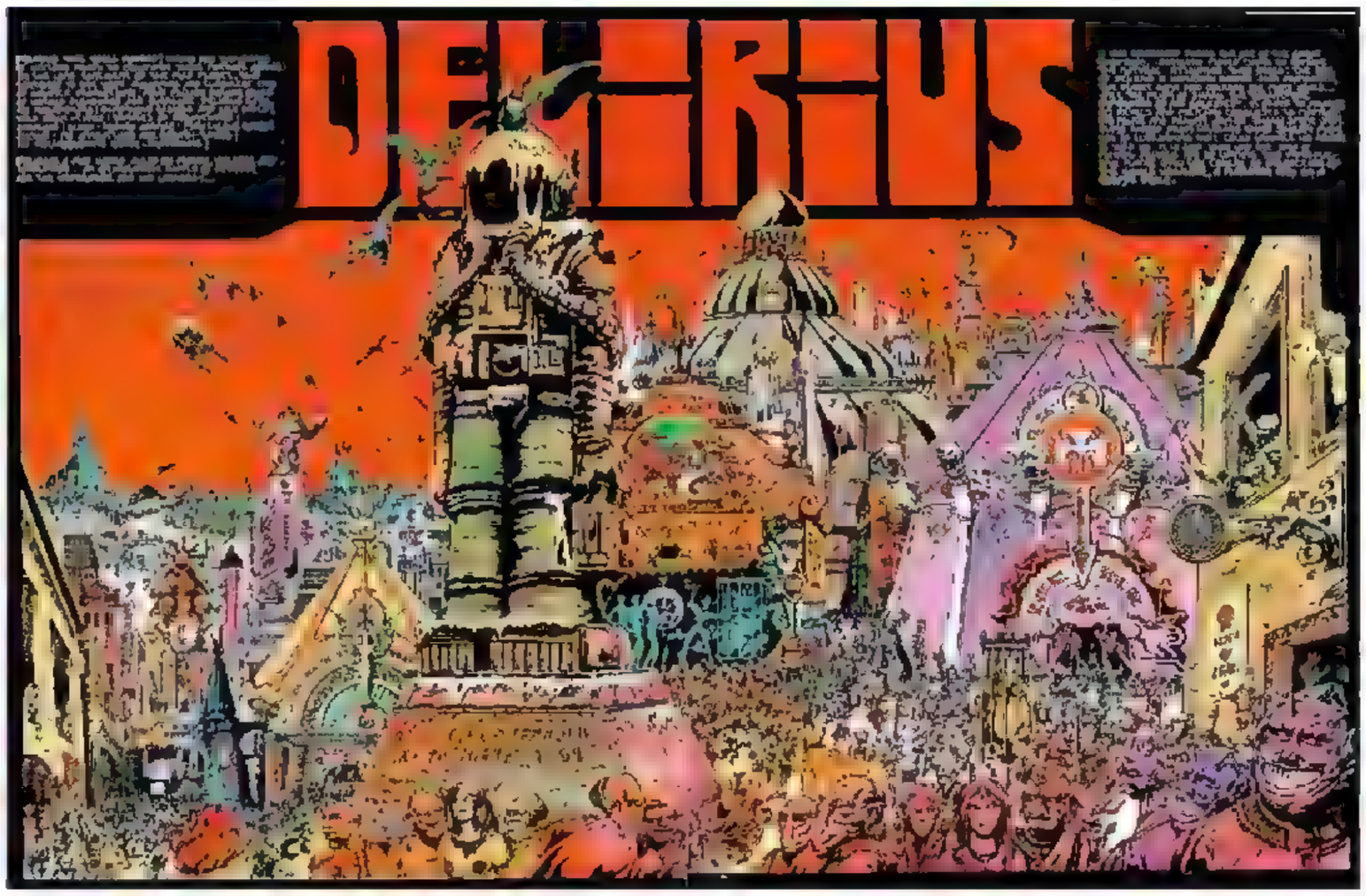
A REBEL AMONG HIS KIND

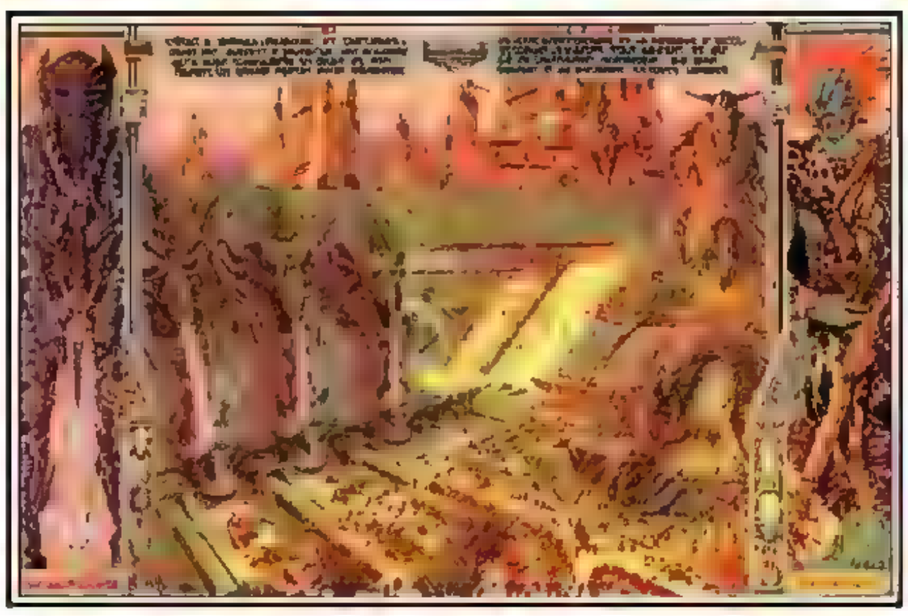
Sloane is a rogue and habitual spectator with almost godlike superpowers, dragged into a strange alternative dimension by a flying sentient throne called "The Seeker". Here he finds himself buffeted by a vast power struggle involving robots, dark gods, space pirates and other yet weirder alien monsters, eventually rocking up at Delirius, "the planet of a hundred thousand pleasures". Imagine an unshaven Silver Surfer, more angry and less woe-is-me, exploring a Gigeresque Las Vegas, and you'll be part-way there.

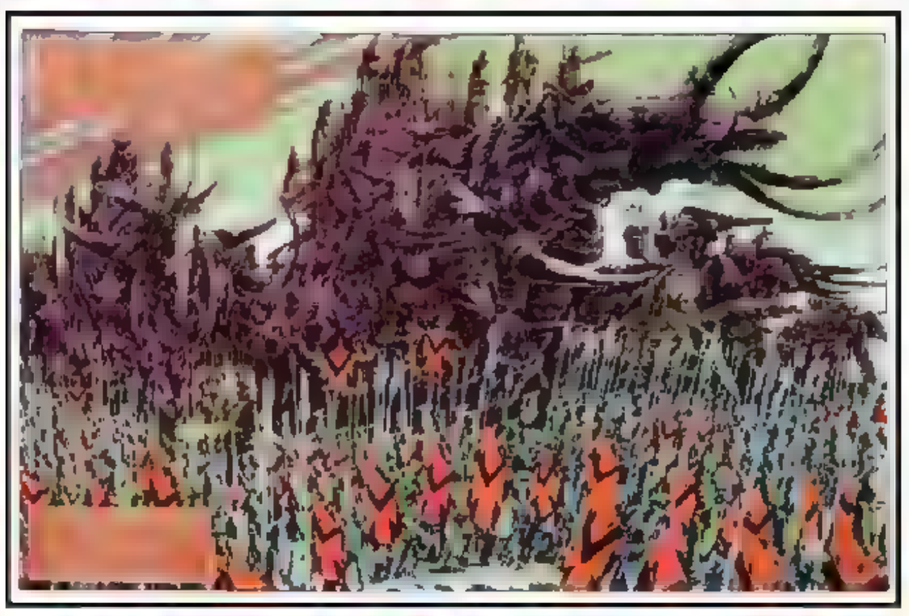
Though Sloane is memorable, and his story a fascinating one, the truly unforgettable aspect of *Delirius* – and Druillet's work in general – is its peculiar page design. Unlike almost all Anglo-American comics (the occasional artist like JH Williams III or Jae Lee aside), his work is best experienced page-by-page (or spread-by-spread) rather than panel-by-panel. Often a building or figure will dominate, with everything else squished into tiny, oddly-shaped panels in the corner or along the bottom. Individual frames will be circular, or triangular, or no-recognised-shape; pages (or just individual portions of such) will flip from the horizontal to the vertical and back again; and the colouring, in heavy greens and rusty reds, yet further intensifies the vivid, oppressive feel, the bleakness only very occasionally leavened by moments of lyricism. Despite the vast vistas and epic scope it's hard to think of another strip as claustrophobic as this one.

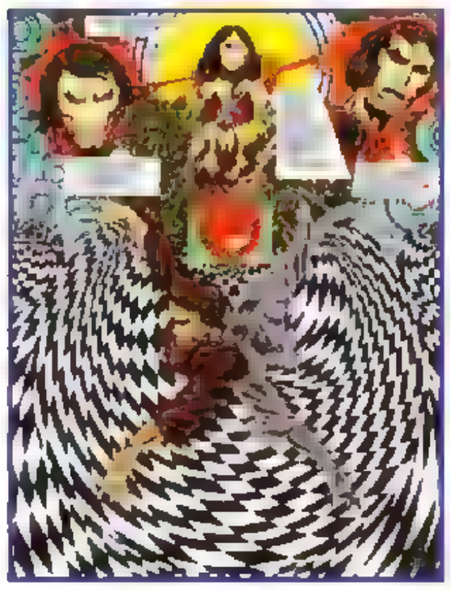
It's long been noted that American comics care mostly about strong, dynamic figurework, European titles about the location and backdrops, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the work of Druillet. Where his colleague and soul-mate Moebius had a gentler take on the human condition – funnier, more ironic, often lyrical – Druillet's work resembled a grandiose howl of pain and confusion, his tiny human figures lost in a chaos beyond their comprehension.

Throughout his tales, the solitary Sloane struggles to keep his feet while beset by forces infinitely more powerful than himself, often standing on the edge of epic battles between the forces of chaos and order, with









chaos always looking to be on the verge of victory. But slowly, and almost despite himself, he becomes more proactive, a determined, vicious and self-serving force in his own right.

And if he's not especially likeable, neither is anybody else, for virtually everyone we meet – human, alien, god or monster – is cruel, destructive and selfish. The short Lone Sloane tales are parables about lust and greed, of a sort – when our hero eventually returns home he finds an Earth bereft of people, populated only by monsters – while in *Delirius* he becomes a rebel on a planet of joyless, taxable pleasure. Here, his underground movement only succeeds in causing total war, and when the chaos brings hidden treasure raining from the sky the people destroy each other to get to it.

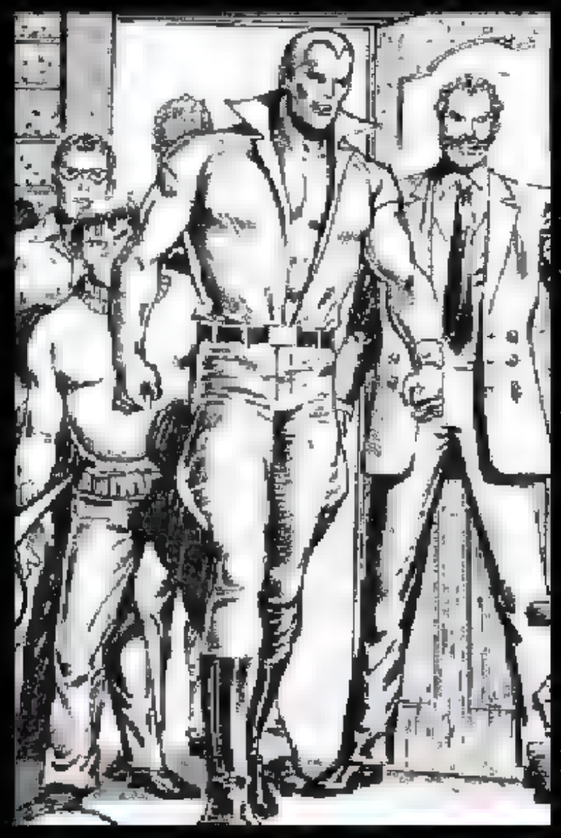
Unlike Moebius, Druillet had enjoyed no formal training; he was a self-taught artist who struggled to get what he imagined down on paper, his eye for graphic design often stronger than his sketchy figure work. When his first Lone Sloane short, "The Mystery Of The Abyss", was published in 1966, the reaction was mixed: letters came in to *Pilote* complaining about this scrappy, baffling work. Still, his reputation, and his craftsmanship, grew with every story.

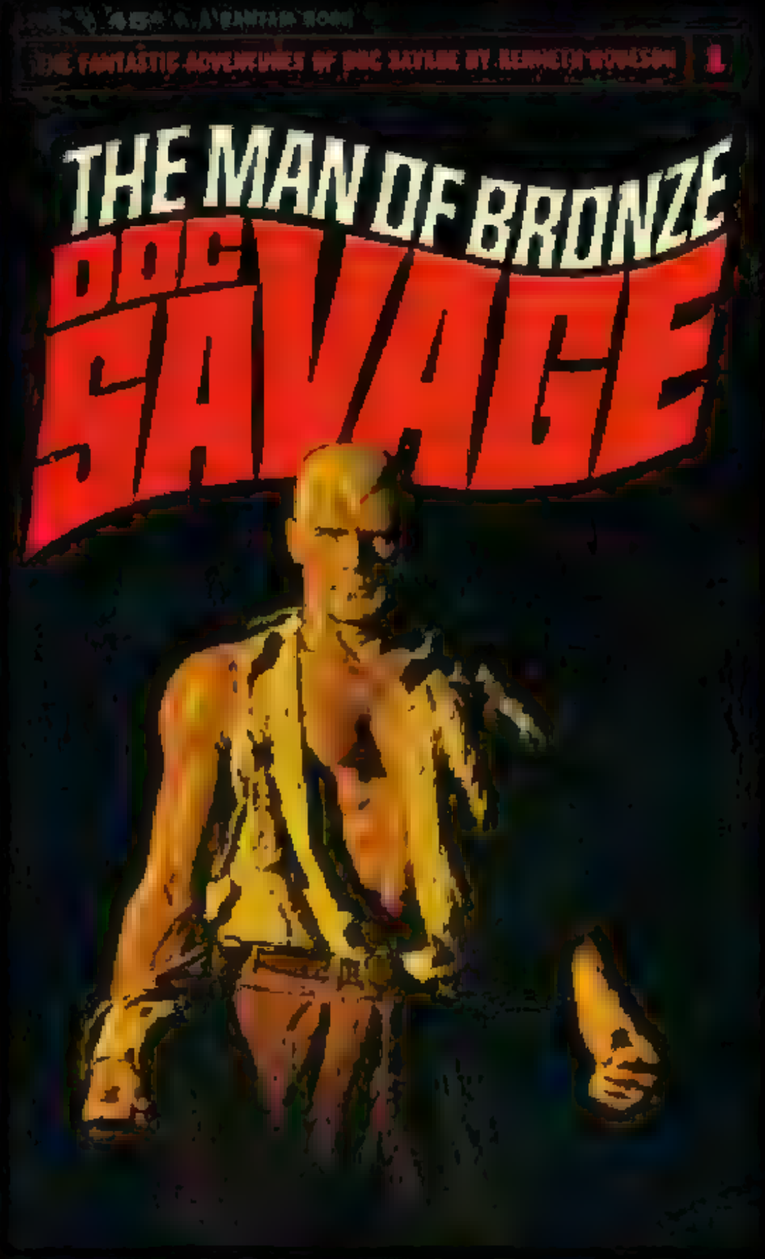
SPECTACLE AND SCALE

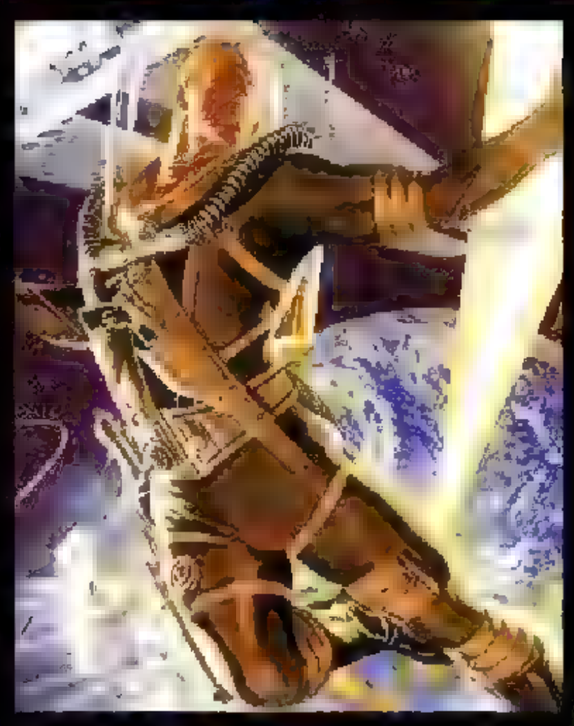
What makes him so exciting is the sheer spectacle he could command. Yes, in terms of sequential narration he's often confusing or frustrating, but look at the compensations – nearly every page is some sort of incredibly detailed and vivid graphic poster, heaving with symbolism and haunting imagery. Some of the most fun are those based on the impossible architecture of Dutch artist MC Escher, but the most spectacular are all his own: a vast bridge through space, the arches resting on planets with screaming space gods supporting each one; a huge temple, the centre of it on fire, swarming with venal worshippers; the planet Earth surrounded by three Uranus-sized bronze warriors. It's hard to be exactly sure what Druillet is getting at some of the time – "people are crap" aside – but the power of his stuff is immense, the mystery fascinating.

Above: Druillet was nicknamed the "space architect" and his fantastical backdrops were a mishmash of Art Nouveau, Asian temples and Gothic cathedrals

Why's this no longer in print? Goodness knows; you're probably best off tracking down an old copy on eBay, or hoping you luck out at a car boot sale.







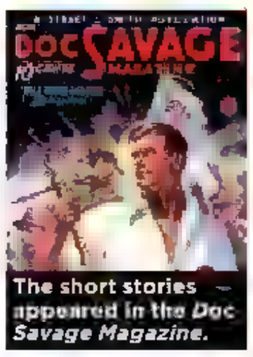
HOW ICONIC CHARACTERS FROM THE WORLD OF PROSE FICTION MADE THE LEAP INTO COMICS

DOC SAVAGE

In the third instalment of our ongoing feature, **James Lovegrove** turns his attention to the bronze-skinned superman of pulp's golden age

MEET THE PROS #3

COMIC HEROES



The short stories appeared in the *Doc Savage Magazine.*

Gold Key's one-shot for the film that never was.

DOC SAVAGE
The THOUSAND-HEADED MAN
AT LONDON'S CROYDON AIRPORT A THRONG GATHERS TO GREET A WORLD FAMOUS CELEBRITY
THAT'S IT, DOC SAVAGE'S PLANE! HE'S COMING IN FOR A LANDING!
IN THE BUSTLE OF THE CROWD NO ONE HEARS A MUFFLED SHOT
SEN-GAT'S MEN! THEY'RE AFTER THIS PACKAGE! BUT THEY'LL NEVER GET IT, I SWEAR!
GOT LOST IN THAT CROWD! IT'S MY ONLY CHANCE!
DOC SAVAGE, Inc. is published by I.W. Publications, Inc., North Road, Poughkeepsie, New York 12601. All rights reserved throughout the world. NOTHING SECRET, DISGUISED, BRANDED OR BRIBED IN THE U.S.A. by Western Printing and Lithographing Company. Copyright © 1933 by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Copyright renewed 1962 by Street & Smith Publications, Inc. Copyright © 1966, by The Conde Nast Publications Inc.

Issue #1 of *DSC* recycled a painting from the 1933 pulp cover for "Pirate Of The Pacific"

Doc Savage is the forefather of comic book superheroes as we know them. He, more than the other members of the classic pulp fiction pantheon – more than the Shadow, the Spider, Zorro, any of them – established the crime-fighter template which the nascent comics industry swiftly copied and expanded on.

Doc had an Arctic-based Fortress of Solitude long before Superman did. He operated out of a New York skyscraper, much like the Fantastic Four. He fought bizarre villains, many of them with names which Stan Lee would later appropriate for his own bad guys – the Leader, the Vanisher, the Metal Master. Without the Man of Bronze, would there have been a Man of Steel? Without Clark Savage Jr, an ordinary human honed to the peak of physical and mental perfection, would there have been a Batman?

Nearly 200 Doc Savage novels were published between 1933 and 1949, the vast majority written by Lester Dent under the "house name" Kenneth Robeson. The series was wildly popular in its day, but how successful has Doc himself been in the medium he did so much to shape?

DOC SUPERHERO

Even while Doc Savage was appearing in prose form, the novels' publisher, Street & Smith, tried him out in comics. A Doc strip appeared as a back-up feature in the first three issues of *Shadow Comics* before graduating to its own title. *Doc Savage Comics* started out showcasing very abbreviated adaptations of Dent stories, but with #5 it was all change as Doc was refashioned into a standard long-underwear vigilante of the kind he had helped inspire. After his plane crashes in Tibet, he discovers a blue hood with a gem in it, the "Sacred Ruby". The hood gives him super-strength, hypnotic powers, and the ability to fly and hurl energy blasts.

Gone was his team of loyal sidekicks, the "Fabulous Five": chemist Andrew Blodgett "Monk" Mayfair, lawyer Theodore Marley "Ham" Brooks, engineer John "Renny" Renwick, electrical genius Thomas "Long Tom" Roberts, and archaeologist and geologist William Harper "Johnny" Littlejohn. The interactio[n] be[tween] these men, in particular the bicke[r] an[d] antagonism between apelike Monk and d[apper] Ham, gave added life to Doc's prose adventures and helped humanise the somewhat aloof central character. All this was sacrificed so that Doc could become yet another caped, cowled super do-gooder.

A second series of *Doc Savage Comics* returned Doc to his costume-less roots but didn't last long, forcing him to find a berth again in the back pages of *Shadow Comics*, where he stayed until the book's cancellation in 1949. In general, the Street & Smith Doc comics are a typical product of their times, crudely executed and occasionally downright odd, as in the tale called "X – The Unknown Quantity". Here, Monk confronts the strip's artist, Al Bare, to complain about how he is drawn. "I ain't as ugly as you make me look!" Monk fulminates, to which Bare replies, "Gad! I'll make you better-looking – but it'll be a lie!"

> **Without the Man of Bronze, would there have been a Man of Steel?**

ADAPTATION OF NON-MOVIE

It wasn't until 1966 that the next Doc Savage comic appeared, a one-shot published by Gold Key in order to tie in with a proposed film adaptation of the Dent novel *The Thousand-Headed Man*. At the time, Doc was enjoying a resurgence in popularity courtesy of Bantam Books, who were reprinting his adventures in mass-market paperback form. The success of the reprints was in no small part down to the sumptuous painted covers by James Bama.

The movie never happened, but the comic, written by Leo Dorfman and drawn by Jack Sparling, isn't too bad. Doc and his aides are in a race with the villainous Sen Gat to reach the mythical City of the Thousand-Headed Man in Cambodia. This is a classic treasure-filled lost

Marvel mined the novels for some Doc Savage gold.

AFTER THE FUNERAL, THERE WAS NOTHING MORE TO BE DONE.
THE MEXICAN AUTHORITIES WILL CONTACT ME SHOULD ANY MORE CLUES SURFACE.
GEE, DOC... THAT'S TERRIBLE I MEAN, I'M SORRY YOUR FRIEND DIED...
SO AM I, MONK, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED WITH MORE KNOWLEDGE. BUT HINDSIGHT IS SCANT COMFORT...
NOW: WHAT WAS ALL THAT EXCITEMENT ABOUT WHEN I ENTERED?
RENNY'S BEEN OFFERED A ROLE IN TINSEL TOWN.
YEAH THE LUCKY STIFF-- WISH I HAD A SHOT AT BEIN' THE NEXT DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS.
DON'T WORRY MONK-- HOLLYWOOD WILL NOTICE YOUR OBVIOUS ATTRIBUTES SOONER OR LATER... WHEN THEY GET AROUND TO REMAKING KING KONG.
YOU KEEP FLAPPIN' YER YAP LIKE THAT, SHYSTER, AND I'M GONNA REMAKE YER FACE! WHAT'S MORE, I--
A highly stylised Doc: all rippling muscles and an arrow-like widow's peak.

city, protected by a poisonous mist derived from cobra venom. Sparling makes Doc look peculiarly old and craggy, but the energy and vigour of the source material is all there.

MAKE MINE MARVEL

Six years later Marvel acquired the comic book licence for Doc Savage. Its first crack at the character comprised adaptations of four of the novels – *The Man Of Bronze*, *Death In Silver*, *The Monsters* and *Brand Of The Werewolf* – devoting two issues apiece to each tale. Steve Englehart did most of the scripting, and the underrated Ross Andru provided the pencils, his work looking its best in #3-#4 under Tom Palmer's delicate, lustrous inks. The emphasis in these comics is very much on action, in the Mighty Marvel manner, making them good solid fast-paced fun.

A Doc Savage movie finally become a reality in 1975, produced by George Pal and starring TV Tarzan, Ron Ely. Marvel got in on the act by relaunching its Doc strip under its black-and-white, magazine-sized Curtis imprint. The first issue offered a painted cover by Roger Kastel based on the movie poster and promised "A Return To Greatness!"

It was no idle boast, as this comic book version of Doc Savage, although lasting just eight issues, is a triumph. Allegedly, writer Doug Moench read only a single Doc novel before embarking on the project. If that's true, his powers of pastiche are remarkable, because his scripts get the tone and plotting exactly right.

The story titles are evocatively spot-on: "The Doom On Thunder Isle", "Hell Reapers At The Heart Of Paradise", "The Earth Wreckers", "The Sky Stealers"... The characterisation is strong too, and Moench finds room for all the elements familiar to and cherished by Doc readers. The perpetual squabbling between Monk and Ham; Doc's feisty and troublesome female cousin Pat; the pneumatic "flea run" transport capsule which connects Doc's headquarters on the 86th floor of the Empire State Building to his waterfront warehouse, the Hidalgo Trading Company, where he stows his fleet of incredible high-tech vehicles – all are present and correct. There are baffling puzzles, cunning gadgets, lovely but deceitful women, hidden ancient civilisations, baddies with world-conquering ambitions, and supernatural-seeming mysteries which turn out to have logical explanations.

The artwork is lush. Although there are different pencillers – John Buscema, Marie Severin, Val Mayerik – almost every story carries the mark of inker Tony DeZuniga, whose use of grey wash and stippling is exemplary. DeZuniga is no slouch in the pencilling department either, as issues #5 and #6 show, and Ernie Chan's work in #8 is similarly praiseworthy.

THE MAN OF BRONZE
DOC SAVAGE
ILLUSTRATED STORIES PHOTOS & FEATURES!
1st ISSUE SPECTACULAR
A DOC SAVAGE MOVIE EXCLUSIVE: GEORGE PAL SPEAKS!

RECAST BRONZE

DC took a crack at Doc in the late '80s, testing the waters with a four-issue miniseries. It was the immediately post-*Watchmen*/*Dark Knight* era when realistic (read: disrespectful) deconstructions of the superhero were all the rage. Writer Dennis O'Neil's tale, "The Silver

...AND THE NEXT MINUTE, THESE JOKERS CRASH THE PARTY!
DON'T FIGHT OPPORTUNITY, KENNY--JUST FIGHT!
CRACK
Curtis's eight-issue run probably best captures the feel of the pulps.
FAMILIARITY BIG CHANGE WHEN HE ARRIVES UNEXPECTEDLY FROM OUTER SPACE!
THE RESULTS ARE PREDICTABLE!
GOOD GRIEF!
CRUNCH!
PUNCHERS ARE THROWN... KNUCKLES CRUNCHED...
YEEEEEEEEEE!!

THE DOC SAVAGE OF EARTH-616?

While Marvel held the Doc Savage licence, it toyed with the idea of folding him firmly into the Marvel Universe. To that end, Doc made co-starring appearances with both Spider-Man and the Thing. In issue #3 of *Giant-Size Spider-Man*, Spidey encounters a blue-skinned alien girl at a demolition site. During the building's foundation-laying ceremony 40 years earlier, Doc and his aides combat a monstrous energy entity that appears to be trying to kill the very same alien girl. The two heroes never actually meet, and the same is true of the Thing and Doc in *Marvel Two-In-One* #21, at least for the first 10 pages where their storylines run in parallel as they investigate separate but linked incidents. Then their timelines merge and together they battle Blacksun, a supervillain fused from a father and son, and powered by a black hole.

THE BULLETS FIRED FROM THIS GUN HAVE NEVER KILLED ANYONE--THEY'RE MERCY-PELLETS, MUCH LIKE THE ONES USED TO KNOCK OUT WILD ANIMALS WITH TOOTHACHES
BUT WHILE I WON'T KILL YOU, I WILL MAKE YOU WISH YOU WERE DEAD. IF YOU DON'T GIVE ME NORTH AMERICA, NOW!
--SO THAT'S YOUR STORY OF THE "EARTH-WRECKERS"... HUH?
WHY HAVE YOU COME TO ME WITH IT?
A-ALL RIGHT, SAVAGE! IT'S BURNED OUT BACK--I EVEN D-DID IT FOR YOU--!
WELL, I--UH--I THOUGHT THAT P-PERHAPS...
...YOU COULD--UH, GET ME IN TOUCH YOUR--UH, FAMOUS COUSIN...AND HE COULD--UH, STOP THE EARTH WRECKERS.
C-C-CAN YOU D-D-DO THAT? WITH THE FAMOUS DOC SAVAGE, I MEAN--? JUST APPROACH HIM...AS YOU WOULD A NORMAL PERSON--?
WELL, THE GLARE FROM HIS BALD MIGHT TEMPO RARILY BLIND YOU, MIS-TER MEEKER
COME ON--I'LL TAKE YOU TO HIM.
OH, TH-TH-THANK YOU...
BUT IT HAS BEEN DONE.
Cousin Pat makes a welcome return during the Moench-led glory years.

Doc attempts to stop the Air Lord blowing up the Hindenburg in *Doc Savage* #19.

Pyramid", starts in 1945 but is soon winging forward in time to the 1960s and then the present day, all nicely illustrated by the Kubert brothers, Andy and Adam. At the end of #1 Doc is seemingly disintegrated by a mad Nazi scientist's ray, leaving his son and grandson to carry on his legacy, with diminishing returns. The son, Clark Savage III, is shot dead by police after gunning down some street hoods. The grandson, known as Chip, grows up feckless and weak-willed, while Doc's five aides continue fighting the good fight but are losing their battle with the infirmities of old age.

Doc eventually returns, looking not a day older than when he disappeared. He wasn't dead, it transpires, merely trapped on a distant planet. There followed an ongoing series which notched up 24 issues plus one annual between 1988 and 1990. Here Doc is provided with a new, younger team of sidekicks to supplement the now marginalised original Five. These include a female Israeli special forces officer, Pat's granddaughter Pam, and a bearded Russian who has patterned himself after Doc.

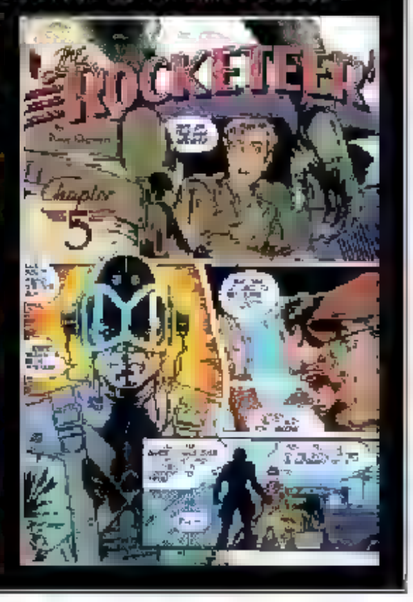
Throughout his run, O'Neil evinces no great love for the character, so it's a relief when he retires from the writing duties with #6. Taking over, Mike Barr swiftly undoes O'Neil's most jarring and egregious misstep: Long Tom was shown to have betrayed Doc to the Nazis out of jealousy – "I was tired of living in your shadow" – but Barr reveals that he was under the influence of a mind-controlling evildoer all along. He also jettisons the ill-fitting SF story elements O'Neil introduced, and revives Doc's only recurring villain, John Sunlight, who featured in two of the original novels, *Fortress Of Solitude* and *The Devil Genghis*. Finally, after a nice four-issue crossover with DC's other ongoing pulp-hero title *The Shadow Strikes!*, the series reverts to a period setting, where it belongs.

Rod Whigham pencils almost every issue, and there isn't much to be said for his work except that it's nowhere near as poor as the art to be discovered in the various Doc Savage miniseries produced by Millennium Comics in the early '90s. John Sunlight is back (again) in the first of these, a tale entitled "The Monarch Of Armageddon", while the second, "Doom Dynasty", pits Doc against Dr Nikola, the occultist criminal mastermind antihero of several late-Victorian novels by Guy Boothby. The third series, "Devil's Thoughts", is a shambolic farrago set early in Doc's career and graced with art that wouldn't look out of place in the *Beano*. A fourth series, adapting the Dent novel *Repel*, was never completed. Millennium's enthusiasm for the

ANONYMOUS CAMEOS

Doc Savage has a walk-on part in Dave Stevens's *The Rocketeer*, where he is identified as the inventor of the rocket-pack which the strip's hero Cliff Secord uses to fly. Two men looking very much like Monk and Ham, although never named as such, turn up at Cliff's apartment, demanding the return of the purloined rocket-pack. Then, when he runs low on fuel, a bronze-skinned giant in jodhpurs and flying helmet comes to his rescue. Cliff's pal Peevy assumes that the stranger is multimillionaire aviator Howard Hughes – but pulp fiction fans know better.

Doc can also be seen lurking in the shadows in the final panels of *Superman Annual* #9 (part of DC's 1997 retro-tastic Pulp Heroes event); watching a newsreel of the Sub-Mariner fighting the Human Torch in *Marvels* #1; and, thinly disguised, as Doc Brass in *Planetary* #5.



character cannot be faulted, but the results are uniformly amateurish.

SHADOW PLAY

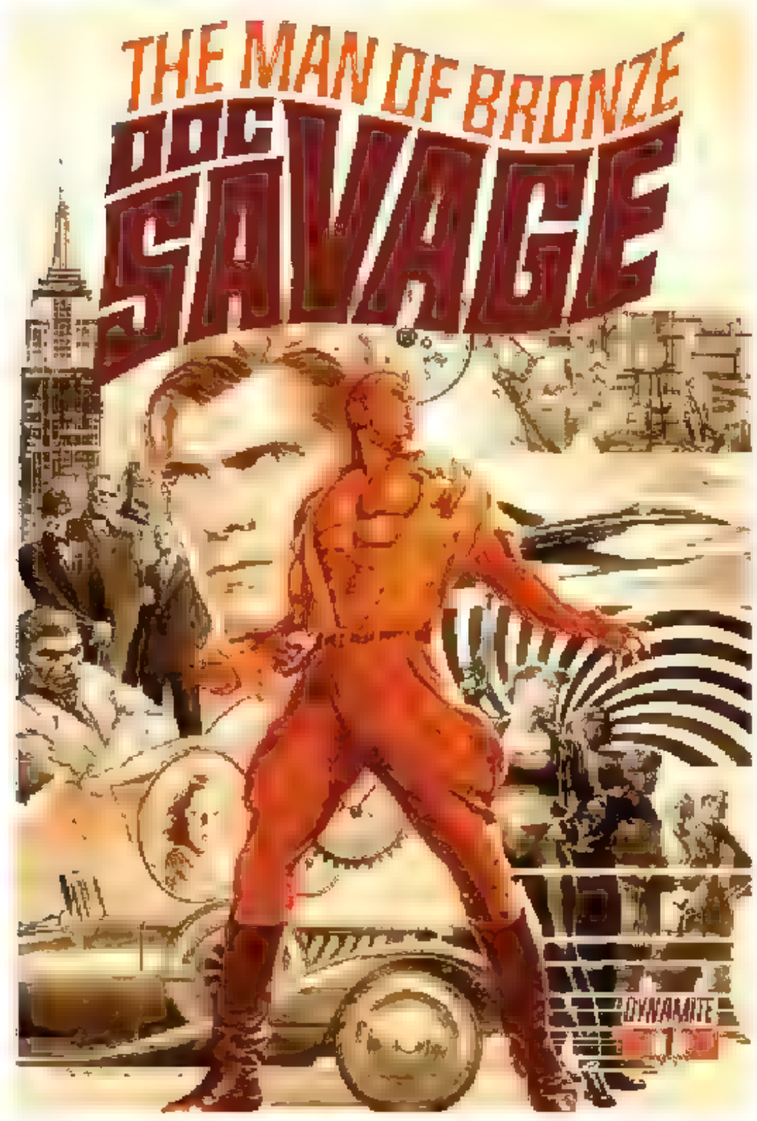
Dark Horse was next in the round-robin of licence holders, and set out its stall by teaming Doc Savage and the Shadow in a 1995 two-issue microseries, "The Case Of The Shrieking Skeletons". This sees the two crimebusters clash over their opposing methods of dealing with crooks – the Shadow kills, while Doc does his utmost to avoid taking life – but nonetheless they manage to co-operate in thwarting a Nazi plot to create a human growth serum. Steve Vance's robustly enjoyable script is accompanied by decent art from Stan Manoukian and Vince Roucher, although their Doc looks hulking and slightly inhuman rather than the perfectly proportioned giant Dent describes.

Also written by Vance, the four-issue miniseries "Curse Of The Fire God" takes Doc and the Five, plus Pat, to South America. There they encounter corrupt local politicians, a crooked oil magnate, and Mayan cultists. Again, Vance provides a well-balanced mix of pulpy elements, and all the requisite character traits are present and correct, from Johnny's love of long words – "I'll be superamalgamated!" – to Pat's tempestuous temper. Gary Gianni's covers are superb; Pat Broderick's interior artwork looks sadly pedestrian by comparison.

DC grabbed Doc Savage back as part of its 2009 First Wave initiative, in which Batman, Doc, the Spirit and other non-powered heroes

were reimagined in a contemporary but noirish setting. A *Batman/Doc Savage Special* by Brian Azzarello with Phil Noto on art served as a lead-in to a six-issue *First Wave* miniseries, again by Azzarello and drawn by Rags Morales. This self-contained universe also featured versions of the Blackhawks, Black Canary and the Avenger.

Twelve issues of a Doc Savage title followed, and it's unconvincing, clunky stuff, Doc's old-school heroism awkwardly juxtaposed against modern war-on-terror story elements. Writers and artists come and go, none of them able to make the hybrid work. The Avenger-starring



Justice Inc back-up feature, gorgeously drawn by Scott Hampton, blows it out of the water.

Azzarello and Noto's *Batman/Doc Savage Special* #1.

AS GOOD AS HE EVER WAS?

Dynamite Comics is currently publishing a series which rivals the Moench-written strip for the accolade of best comic book Doc adaptation. Chris Roberson pens adventures which are faithful to the character and his world while gradually, issue by issue, nudging him forward through time into the 21st century. He introduces little Easter Egg references that will delight Docolytes; for instance the plant silphium which, in the novel *Fear Cay*, turns out to be the true source of the Fountain of Youth. Bilquis Evely's disappointingly flimsy art notwithstanding, Roberson's Doc Savage is the Man of Bronze as he ought to be: decent, noble, indomitable, eternal. CH

KRACKERS
KRACKERS COMICS & GAMES

COMICS • GRAPHIC NOVELS • TOYS
WARHAMMER • DUNGEONS & DRAGONS
STAR WARS • MAGIC: THE GATHERING
DR WHO • KID ROBOT • FAMILY GUY
FUTURAMA AND HALO

5 BATH PLACE, TAUNTON, SOMERSET TA1 4ER TEL: (01823) 335 057
WWW.KRACKERS.COM

American GRAFFITI
.The Comics Specialist.
Stockists of US comics, Graphic Novels, Manga and much more
78 Church Lane (Off High Street.) Barnstaple
Devon EX 31 1BH
Tel: 01271 325740
e-mail shop@amgrafcomics.co.uk

To advertise in
SFX
call Adrian Hill on
01225 442244
or email adrian.hill@futurenet.com

THE SHEFFIELD SPACE CENTRE
Stockists of US Comics, Anime & Manga, SF Merchandise and more!
The Sheffield Space Centre
33 The Wicker, Sheffield, S3 8HS.
Tel 0114 2758905
Open 10am to 5pm Mon to Fri
9am to 5pm Sat, Closed Sundays
Visit our website at www.space-centre.co.uk

Recycle your magazine and seven days later it could come back as your newspaper.
recycle
The possibilities are endless.
www.recyclenow.com

LONDON COMIC MART

AT THE ROYAL NATIONAL HOTEL, LONDON, WC1H 0DG

FREE ENTRY!
DOORS OPEN
12PM

2014 DATES

20TH JULY

SPECIAL GUESTS JOHN HIGGINS,
KIM NEWMAN, SIMON FURMAN

21ST SEPTEMBER

16TH NOVEMBER

7TH DECEMBER

OVER 100 TABLES

SELLING COMICS, COLLECTABLES, RARE ITEMS & MORE!

FIND SILVER AGE COMICS, GOLDEN AGE COMICS, DVDS, COLLECTIBLE FIGURES, GRAPHIC NOVELS AND MORE!

TO BOOK A TABLE AT OUR COMIC MART

PLEASE EMAIL DEMIGOD@BTCONNECT.COM

FOR OTHER ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT

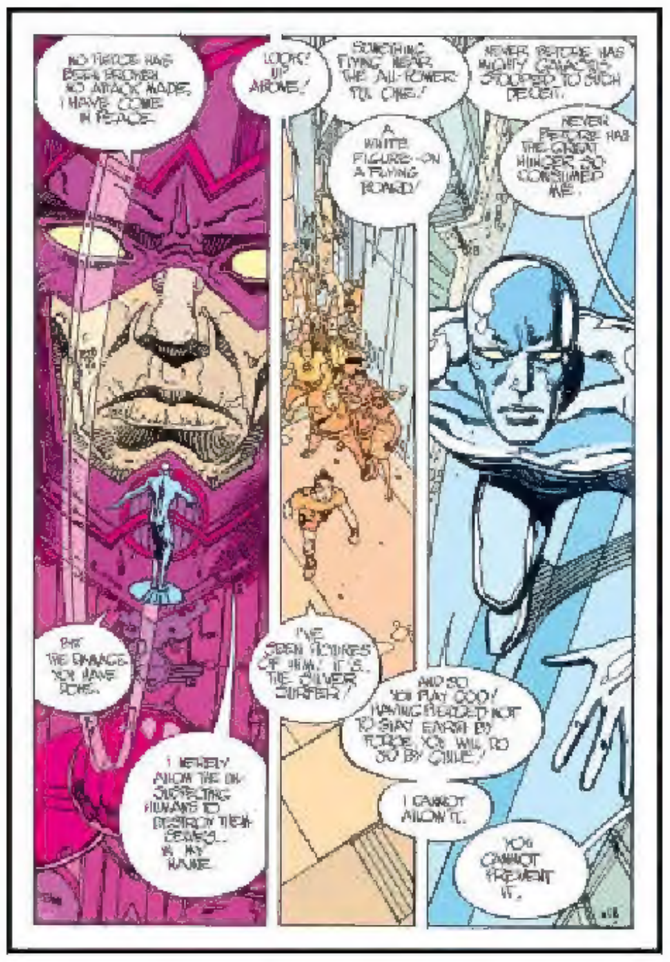
MIKE CONROY AT 01322 35332 SKYPE: MIKE_CONROY 48

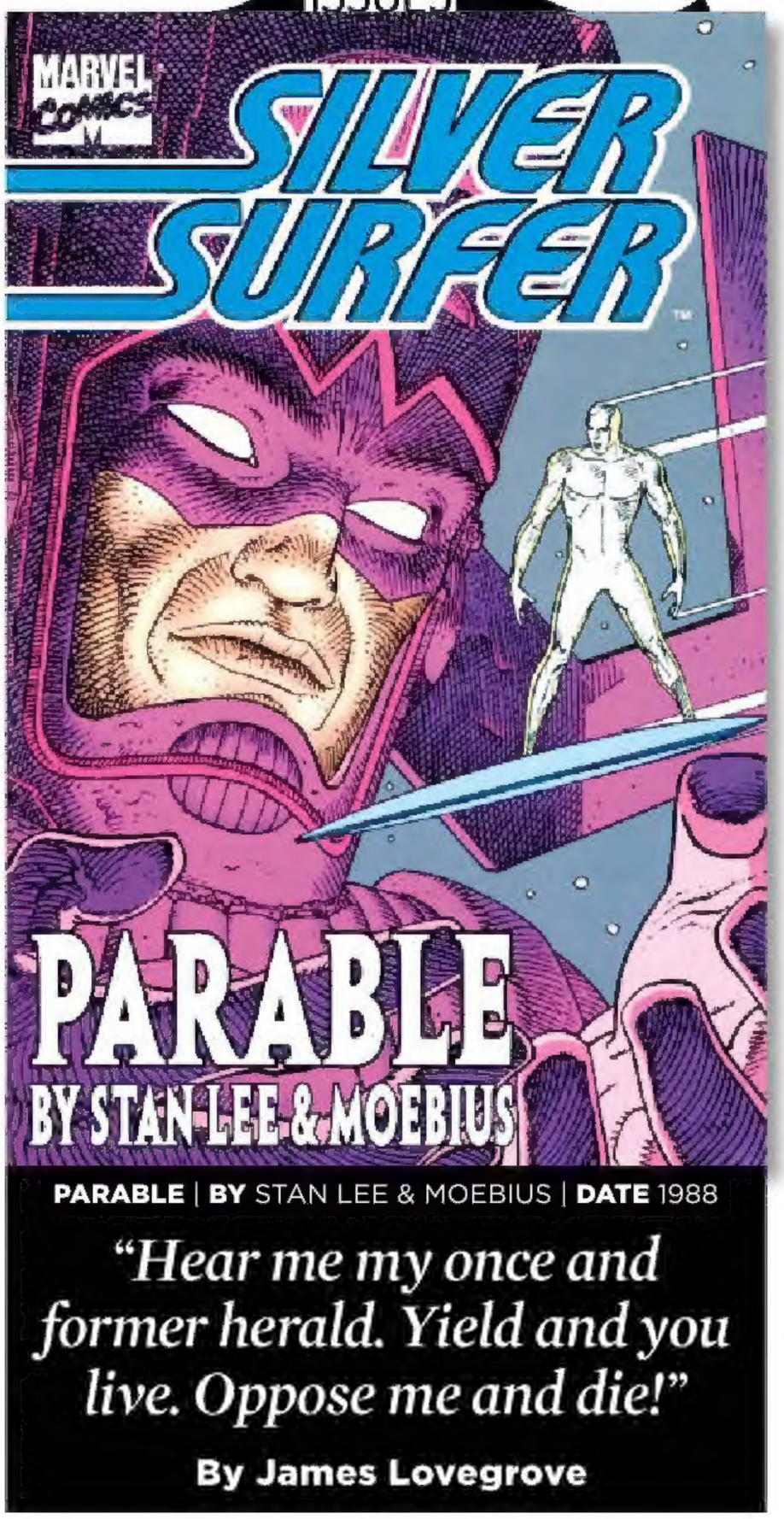
EMAIL: DEMIGOD@BTCONNECT.COM

WWW.LONDONCOMICMART.CO.UK

Check the website or call: 01908 671138 for event information, latest updates & info on all upcoming events

BIG ISSUES


NO FIERCE HAS BEEN BROKEN NO ATTACK MADE. I HAVE COME IN PEACE.
LOOK! UP ARROW!
SOMETHING FLYING NEAR THE ALL-POWER TOL ONE.
NEVER BEFORE HAS MIGHTY GALACTUS STOOPED TO SUCH DECEIT.
A WHITE FIGURE ON A FLYING BOARD!
NEVER BEFORE HAS THE GREAT HUNGER SO CONSUMED ME.
BUT THE IMAGE YOU HAVE TOOK.
I'VE SEEN PICTURES OF HIM. IT IS THE SILVER SURFER!
I HEREBY ALLOW THE DW SURFACING HUMANS TO DESTROY THEM SELVES... IS MY WARE.
AND SO YOU PLAY GOD! HAVING HERALDED NOT TO STAY EARTH BY FORCE YOU WILL DO SO BY GUILE!
I CANNOT ALLOW IT.
YOU CANNOT PREVENT IT.



NEVER BEFORE HAS A FOE BEEN SPARED- AT WHICH POINT IN THE SAGA?
HEAR ME MY ONCE AND FORMER HERALD!
YIELD... AND YOU LIVE!
OPPOSE ME AND DIE!
DEATH HOLDS NO FEAR FOR ME!
AND NEVER BEFORE HAVE MY BLADE PIERCED SO UNJUST A HUMANOID!

PARABLE | **BY** STAN LEE & MOEBIUS | **DATE** 1988

"Hear me my once and former herald. Yield and you live. Oppose me and die!"

By James Lovegrove

For a time, the Silver Surfer was Marvel's golden boy. Making his debut in the famed three-issue "Galactus Trilogy" arc (*Fantastic Four* #48-50), he was granted his own title in 1968. That book was exceptional in that each issue was twice as thick – and twice as expensive – as the average comic, with the Surfer's strip occupying 40 pages rather than the usual 20-odd. Artist John Buscema filled large panels with shots of the Sentinel of the Spaceways emoting dramatically while Stan Lee provided impassioned declamatory dialogue.

Man's inhumanity to man was a recurring theme of the Surfer's tortured soliloquies, as well as the unfairness of his own lot (he had been exiled on Earth as punishment for defying his master Galactus's will). The character was both Jesus and Lucifer, messiah and fallen angel, suffering for his individualism and his defiance of authority, a brave loser in tune with the era's prevailing counterculture movement, which favoured suffering heroes.

When the book was cancelled after 17 issues, sporadic guest appearances followed, along with a couple of super-sized one-shots, both written by Lee, one drawn by Jack Kirby, the other John Byrne. It felt like any Surfer solo adventure was a rarity, a special event.

A second series arrived in 1987, but this was mainly space-operatic superhero shenanigans. Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers acquitted themselves creditably on script and art, but it didn't feel like a proper Surfer book.

MANY DREAMS IN THE SOUL, NOT THE BIRTH PLACE.
DON'T GO, GALACTUS IS TOO POWERFUL FOR WORSHIP. HAH... NO ONE WILL HELP YOU. YOU'LL BE ALONE. YOU'LL BE DESTROYED!
IF WE TURN FROM BATTLE BECAUSE THERE IS LITTLE HOPE OF VICTORY WHERE WOULD VALOR BE?
YET IT DOES BE THE GOAL THAT STIRS US, NOT THE ODDS.
YOUR SOUL IS RICH IN WARMTH AND KINDNESS, ELYNA.
IT IS FOR SUCH AS YOU THAT THE SURFER AGAIN SOAR.

Lee expressed disappointment about the new series, lamenting the fact that he didn't have the time to write the comic himself. He felt a proprietorial love for the Surfer stronger than he felt for any of the other characters he had co-created. A chance meeting with the French comics artist Jean Giraud (aka Moebius) led to the two of them agreeing to collaborate on a Silver Surfer tale, and thus *Parable* was born.

Moebius was keen to try working to the Marvel method – laying out the pages according to a detailed plot synopsis, with the writer adding captions and dialogue afterwards – and admitted being terrified by the project. "Until the very last moment," he said, "I had no idea how I was going to draw this book." He also insisted that the book come out in the usual comic format and on standard newsprint paper so that he could experiment with a thicker line and a plainer palette of colours than he was accustomed to.

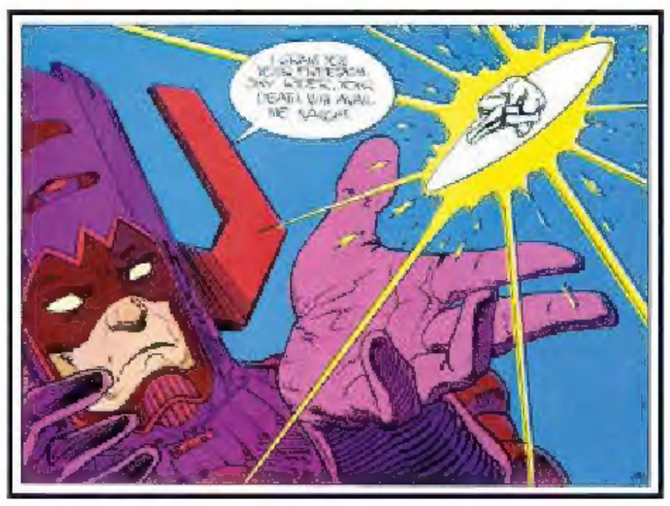
The result was a two-issue microseries that was almost immediately reprinted on glossy paper stock in a prestigious hardback edition. So seamless is the join between the two halves that it is, for all intents and purposes, a single comic, and the tale it tells is as heartfelt and tragic as any Lee has written. Set in the near future, the story opens with a hungry Galactus revisiting Earth in a none-more-phallic spaceship. Instead of the taciturn, enigmatic entity we're used to, this is a talkative and demonstrative figure who quickly leaves the world's population in no doubt that they are in the presence of a supreme being – a god, even – whose creed is chaos. "I am come to set you free, free from guilt!" he declares. "Free from worthless manmade laws! If you would be saved, do what you will! Take what you will! There is no wrong! There is no sin! Pleasure is all! ... So speaks GALACTUS!"

The Silver Surfer, his former herald, is now a derelict, living on the streets with his surfboard wrapped in rags. Only he sees the truth: Galactus is pulling off a con. In order to get around his vow to leave Earth alone, the World Devourer is encouraging humankind to destroy itself in an orgy of selfishness and anarchy. He can then consume what is left.

An evangelical preacher, Colton Candell, proclaims himself Galactus's prophet and exhorts everyone to obey this self-styled deity's word. His sister Elyna has her doubts, and she finds herself questioning a dogma which drives children to burn their schools, turns brother against brother and sees the strong imprisoning the poor and helpless. Her purity of soul impels the Surfer to turn on Galactus again and lead the way in rejecting insane fanaticism and violence committed in the name of faith.

Thus the Surfer becomes intercessor, placing himself between god and man, arguing for love and free will over cold divine authority. The Christ parallels are made explicit in a panel where he hangs in mid-air on his board, arms outstretched, forgiving the angry mob who are pelting him with missiles: "Truly, they do not know what they do."

Parable is the work of two comics greats from the opposite ends of the artistic spectrum – bumptious American enthusiasm meets cerebral European elegance – and the results are uniquely profound and majestic. CH



Walls have never looked so cool

Decorate your room with a super cool 'Made to Measure' wall mural from Wallsauce.com

All wall mural images © Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. All rights reserved.

✓ OFFICIALLY LICENCED ✓ CUSTOM SIZED ✓ EASY ONLINE ORDERING ✓ FREE UK DELIVERY

Wallsauce.com

Enquire or order online today at wallsauce.com

E: info@wallsauce.com T: 01772 284110

Wallsauce.com, 8 Manor Court, Salesbury Hall Road, Ribchester, Lancashire PR3 3XR UK. Wallsauce.com is a trading name of Omega Sky Ltd. Company Number 08243582

COMING SOON...

Star Trek & Harry Potter

COMIC HEROES

2010 – 2014

Thank you for reading!

IncognitoComics.com
EST 1989

INTO COMICS?

Over 1 Million items from the 1930's Onwards.
Comics - Action Figures - Toys - Statues - Busts
Autographs - Graphic Novels - Manga

75,000 Unique Items For Sale Online!

JOB DONE!

Incognito Comics & Collectables
PO Box 431, Dover, Kent, CT16 9ED
Tel 01304 832335
EMAIL: sales@incognitocomics.co.uk

eBay Power Seller - Amazon Preferred Seller
Listed as: Incognito Comics And Collectables

JOIN US @ INCOGNITOCOMICS

All Marvel characters and the distinctive likeness(es) thereof are Trademarks & Copyright © 1941-2012 Marvel Characters, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.